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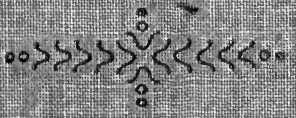
ENGLISH CLASSICS

ROBERT BURNS
SELECTIONS

EDITED BY

L. G. HUFFORD



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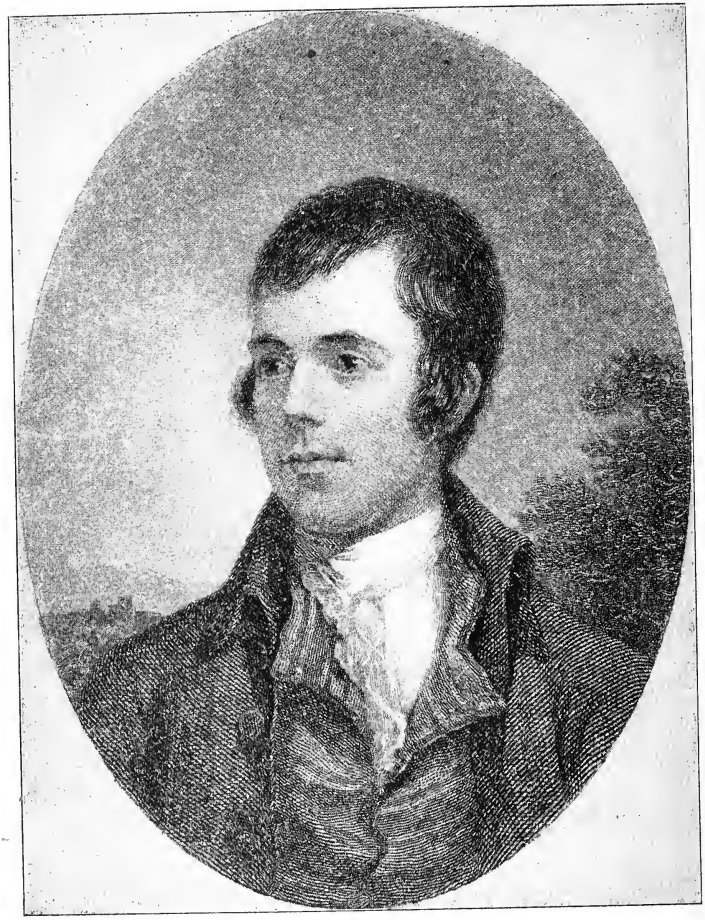

The Academy Series of English Classics

SELECTIONS

FROM THE POETRY OF

ROBERT BURNS

WITH

NOTES, INTRODUCTION, AND GLOSSARY

EDITED BY

LOIS G. HUFFORD

TEACHER OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL
AT INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

The simple Bard, unbroke by rules of art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspired, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Hers all the melting thrill, and hers the kindling fire.

Motto prefixed to the first edition of Burns's Poems.

Boston

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PREFACE.

Although especially intended for secondary schools, it is hoped that this volume of selections from the poetry of Burns may commend itself to a wider circle of students.

No attempt has been made to show all the phases of Burns's genius; the effort rather has been to show him at his best. It is through such of his poems as are included in this volume that his powerful influence in restoring to English poetry a higher standard and a purer taste than had prevailed in the earlier part of the eighteenth century is best seen.

The notes aim to give, as far as possible, the circumstances attending the composition of each poem. They are based chiefly upon authorized Edinburgh editions of the poet, and upon the interpretation of friendly critics. Such words as are not given in the glossary will be found in the notes.

L. G. H.

Indianapolis, Indiana,
February, 1898.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

OF

BURNS' POEMS.

PUBLISHED AT KILMARNOCK IN 1786.

THE following trifles are not the production of a Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names, their countrymen, are at least in their original language, *a fountain shut up and a book sealed.* Unacquainted with the necessary rules for commencing poetry by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality of friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to make him think anything of his worth showing; and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press.

To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind, — these were his motives for courting the muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, obscure, nameless bard, shrinks aghast at the

thought of being branded as an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence, forsooth!

It is an observation of that celebrated poet, Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honor to our language, our nation, and our species, that "*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!" If our critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him once for all that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that even in his highest pulse of vanity he has not the most distant pretension. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation.

To his subscribers, the author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship, for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom — to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others — let him be condemned without mercy to contempt and oblivion.

DEDICATION.

(Second Edition, Edinburgh, 1787.)

To the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt.

My Lords and Gentlemen: —

A Scottish Bard, proud of name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service — where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land; those who bear the honors and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha — at the plough; and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes, and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honored protection; I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favors; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile Author, looking for a continuation of these favors; I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the Great Fountain of Honor, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the Echoes in the ancient and favorite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party; and may Social Joy await your return. When harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats; and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling, indignant glance; and may tyranny in the Ruler, and licentiousness in the People, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honor to be,
With the sincerest gratitude, and highest respect,
My Lords and Gentlemen,
Your most devoted humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, April 4, 1787.

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INTRODUCTION.

A DISTINGUISHED gentleman once asked a poor man whom he met near the home of Robert Burns, "Can you explain to me what it is that makes Burns such a favorite with all in Scotland? Other poets you have, and great ones, but I do not perceive the same instant flash, as it were, of an electric feeling when any name is named but that of Burns." "I can tell you," said the man, "what it is. It is because he had the heart of a man in him. And there is nothing, at least in a poor man's experience, either bitter or sweet, but a line of Burns springs to his mouth, and gives him comfort and courage if he needs it. It is like a second Bible."

Since hearts are the same the world over, the poet who has thus voiced the joys and sorrows of his countrymen is the poet of humanity; his message comes with power to every feeling heart.

The heritage of Robert Burns was no mean one, even though he was born in the "clay biggin" of a peasant farmer. His father, William Burness (as he spelled the name), was one of Nature's noblemen, — a man of strong common sense, sterling piety, and honor; one who was rigidly just with himself and with others; a lover of knowledge. From his mother, Robert inherited personal beauty and magnetism, a poetic temperament, and an ardent nature. The story goes that a wandering gypsy, to whom his father had done a service, prophesied of the newborn babe: —

"He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a':
He'll be a credit 'till us a',
We'll a' be proud o' Robin."

In the same song in which the poet thus preserves the prophecy, he poetically records the date of his birth:—

"Our monarch's hindmost year but-ane
Was five and twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar win'
Blew hansel in on Robin."

The "blast of Janwar wind" tore off a portion of the roof of the cottage which the poet's father had built for his young wife, Agnes Brown, and compelled her to take refuge, with nine-days-old Robert, in the home of a neighbor, until the roof could be repaired.

January 25th, 1759, the birthday of Robert Burns, did, indeed, bring "hansel" (*a choice gift*) to Scotland; for the child thus roughly welcomed was destined to become the true poet laureate of his native land.

Around the ingleside of William and Agnes Burness was gathered, in time, a group of seven children, of whom Robert was the eldest. Farming in Scotland is always difficult, and, in the case of the Burns family, the struggle with poverty was, at times, very bitter. The father was never robust; their scanty means would not pay the hire of a farm hand, nor even provide sufficient nourishing food for the growing children. For several years, butcher's meat was never upon their table. At thirteen, Robert threshed their crop of corn with his own hands; at fifteen, he was the principal laborer on their little farm. "This kind of life," he writes, "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, and the unceasing toil of a galley slave, brought me to my sixteenth year."

But life in that cottage had another side: love presided over this home; reverent piety and trust filled the hearts of the parents; both by example and precept, high principles of truth and virtue were instilled in the hearts of the children. The poet's picture of a Saturday Night in a Cotter's home is a perfect reproduction of his childhood's experiences.

There was much in the atmosphere of his early home life,

also, to nourish the germs of poetic power in his soul. His sweet-tempered, happy-hearted mother went singing about her work; her memory was stored with the songs and ballads of her native Scotland. These tunes haunted the soul of Robert, until his Muse taught him to give them worthier words, thus linking his name forever with the sweetest strains of Scottish music. The "patriotic tide" which flowed through the veins of a Wallace and a Bruce, surged with kindred strength in the heart of Robert Burns; in his case, the boy's natural reverence for heroes was warmed to a glow of enthusiasm by fireside stories of Scotland's patriots.

Imagination, as well as feeling, was enkindled in his early days. To his mother's store of ballads and stories was added a wealth of tradition and folklore through the tales told by an old woman who resided in the family, and who was remarkable for superstitious credulity. Of this woman, Burns writes: "She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, kelpies, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a lookout on suspicious places, and, though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."

William Burness, though poor, was intelligent and a lover of knowledge. He was determined that his children should have, at least, the fundamentals of a good education. He himself was their first teacher; besides teaching them to read and write, he was accustomed to read the Bible to them, and to explain the meaning. When Robert was seven years old, the family moved from Ayr to another farm at Mount Oliphant. There a tutor was employed to teach arithmetic, grammar, French, and Latin to the Burns boys, together with the sons of five neighboring farmers. To this tutor, John Murdoch, Robert Burns acknowl-

edges his great indebtedness. He taught the boys, not only to read and to parse, but to give the exact meaning of words, to supply ellipses, and to substitute plain for poetic words and phrases. In the walks which he took with Burns, he added much valuable information to that given in the schoolroom. Murdoch testifies that he found Robert quick in apprehension, and not afraid to study when knowledge was to be the reward. Burns himself writes: "Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar, and, by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles."

Some chance visitor to the home of Burns has reported that he found the family at their frugal meal, each with a spoon in one hand, and a book in the other. This characteristic view plainly shows with what eagerness they sought for knowledge. Burns relates that the first two books which he ever read in private were *The Life of Hannibal*, and *The History of Sir William Wallace*. "Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."

The friendship of their well-to-do neighbors also served them a good turn; for the books on the shelves of the Ayrshire squires among their acquaintance were willingly loaned. In this way, Burns early became familiar with Pope, some plays of Shakespeare, Addison's *Spectator Papers*, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Boyle's *Lectures on Science*, Salmon's and Guthrie's *Geographical Grammars*, Allan Ramsay's *Poems*, and other works of less note, but which were influential in forming his taste. A collection of Scottish Songs became his constant companion, and, we might say, his master in the science of verse. He says: "I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime from affectation and

fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is." Certainly no poet ever had a truer ear for the music of verse than had Robert Burns.

He well deserves the title of "the ploughman poet" which he proudly bore; for his Muse did, indeed, find him at the plough. Many of his noblest poems were composed in the open air. Like Wordsworth, he breathed more freely under the open sky, amid the inspiring sights and sounds of nature, than within four walls.

It was the stimulus of love for a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass" with whom, according to the Scottish custom, he was working in the harvest field, that first led Burns to voice his feelings in song. The lassie sang sweetly, and Burns, then a youth of sixteen, longed to hear his verses from her lips. *Handsome Nell*, the song which he composed in her honor, is a delicate tribute of youthful love, and one that any lassie might be proud to receive: —

"As bonnie lasses I hae seen,
And mony full as braw,
But for a modest, gracefu' mien,
The like I never saw.

. . . . . .

"She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars onie dress look weel."

Many were the strains of tender sentiment inspired by the love of woman that afterwards flowed from the pen of Burns, for he seems to have been so susceptible to the influence of a bright eye and a winning smile that he was impelled to pay tribute of verse to every fair charmer. Although this extreme susceptibility must be accounted a weakness, and although it sometimes led him into serious error, yet it is also true that many of Burns's love songs are among the most beautiful expressions of pure feeling ever written.

The farm at Mount Oliphant had proved, as Burns said, "a

ruinous bargain;" so, in 1777, another change was made, the family removing to Lochlea and taking an upland farm on the north bank of the river Ayr. From his eighteenth to his twenty-fifth year, this was the home of Robert Burns. They were years of hard work, and of some growth in poetic power. While following the plough, he was inventing new poetic forms, and "gathering round him the memories and the traditions of his country till they became a mantle and a crown." Here he began to cherish the hope —

> "That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
> Some useful plan or book could make,
> Or sing a sang at least."

In his seventeenth year, greatly against his father's wishes, Robert attended dancing-school, "to give his rustic manners a brush," as he said. In his nineteenth year, he went to the village of Kirkoswald on the coast, to study mensuration and surveying; but, unfortunately for Burns, the village was full of smugglers, in whose unprincipled society he was introduced to scenes of "swaggering riot and roaring dissipation." The farm at Lochlea was especially adapted to the growing of flax; so, in 1781, Robert went to Irvine to learn the trade of flax-dressing. There he made acquaintances whose lax principles still further lowered his own standard of morals; he was robbed by his partner in trade, and, to crown all, as he was engaged with some companions in giving a welcoming carousal to the New Year, his shop took fire and burned to the ground. He returned home to find his father, worn out with the unequal struggle with poverty, dying of consumption.

After their father's death, the two sons, Robert and Gilbert, leased the small farm of Mossgiel in the parish of Mauchline. In the hope of retrieving the fortunes of the family, they studied books on farming, and put forth every effort to succeed; but again wet seasons and bad seed caused heavy losses. The four years spent at Mossgiel, however, were fruitful years for Burns; for in these were produced a large number of his best poems. His favorite time for composition was still at the

plough; but at night the poet used to retire to the garret room which he occupied with his brother Gilbert, and there, seated at a small deal table, he would transcribe the verses which he had composed in the field. In one of his poems, he tells us: —

> "An aim I never fash,
> I rhyme for fun."

When harvests failed and disappointment made him heart-sick, he found solace in rhyming, —

> "it's aye a treasure,
> My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
> At hame, a-fiel', at wark, at leisure."

Every lover of the tender and true in poetry must rejoice that the sadly overtasked spirit of Robert Burns could thus find glad relief in immortal verse.

The year 1786 was a critical one to Burns. Harassed by difficulties due partly to poverty, partly to his own errors, he reluctantly decided to leave his beloved Scotland, and seek his fortunes in Jamaica; but how should he raise the sum needed to pay his passage? At this juncture, his friend, Gavin Hamilton, who had a very high opinion of his poems, suggested that he should publish them in order to defray the expense of the voyage. At that time, it was customary to publish books by subscription; so a list of subscribers was sought for, and easily found among the gentry of the neighborhood, with whom Burns was a great favorite. An edition of six hundred copies was printed by John Wilson of Kilmarnock; every copy was quickly sold, the author realizing twenty pounds from the sale, nine pounds of which he applied to the purchase of a passage to Jamaica.

> "Bonnie Doon, sae sweet and gloamin',
> Fare thee weel before I gang!
> Bonnie Doon, whare early roamin'
> First I weaved the rustic sang!"

The thought of banishing himself from his beloved Scotland, every flower, and stream, and brae of which was dear to him,

plunged him into the most painful despondency; in this melancholy mood he wrote, —

"The gloomy night is gath'ring fast."

But Scotland would not permit the self-exile of her newly-found son of genius. "The country murmured of him from sea to sea." A Scotch writer says: "With his poems, old and young, grave and gay, learned and ignorant, were alike transported. I well remember how even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned the most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns."

Among those who were thus captivated by the new singer, was an Edinburgh poet and man of critical taste, Dr. Thomas Blacklock, who wrote to an Ayrshire friend, expressing great admiration of the poems, and adding that, for the sake of the young man, he wished that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed. A favorable review of his poems by the *Edinburgh Review* still further encouraged Burns, and he determined to go at once to Edinburgh, without even waiting for a letter of introduction.

Before leaving Ayrshire, however, the poet made the acquaintance of the distinguished Scotch metaphysician, Dugald Stewart, who was spending the summer in the neighborhood, and who invited Burns to dine with him. On that occasion, Burns met also a young nobleman, who was the guest of Dr. Stewart. It was the peasant poet's first introduction to the nobility, and he has given a humorous account of his feelings: —

"This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er to be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprachled [1] up the brae,
I dinner'd wi' a lord.

. . . . . .

[1] Scrambled.

"I sidling sheltered in a nook,
An' at his lordship steal't a look
Like some portentous omen:
Except good sense and social glee,
An' (what surprised me) modesty,
I markèd nought uncommon.

"I watched the symptoms of the great,
The gentle pride, the lordly state,
The arrogant assuming:
The fient a pride, nae pride had he,
Nor sauce, nor state, that I could see,
Mair than an honest ploughman."

The native dignity and manly pride of honest worth which distinguished Burns are thus attested by Professor Stewart: "His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting: but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology."

In the distinguished society of the Scotch capital, where his genius won him a warm welcome, Burns preserved the same self-respecting demeanor; his manner was absolutely free from affectation. "He manifested," says Lockhart, "in the whole

strain of his bearing, his belief that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was where he was entitled to be, hardly deigning to flatter them by exhibiting a symptom of being flattered." Walter Scott, then a youth of sixteen, has left a similar testimony. He says: "There was a strong expression of shrewdness in his lineaments; the eye alone indicated the poetic character and temperament. It was of a large and dark cast, and literally glowed when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the least intrusive forwardness."

During his winter in Edinburgh, Burns made some friendships among people of influence and station whose appreciation of his genius was sincere. The kind hospitality of the Duchess of Gordon, he has commemorated in *Castle Gordon*. The Earl of Glencairn rendered him a substantial service by securing for him the patronage of the Caledonian Hunt, a society of the Scottish nobility, under whose auspices a second edition of his poems was published in 1787. Twenty-eight hundred copies were taken by subscription; Burns's share of the profits was five hundred pounds.

The ploughman poet felt himself out of place, however, in the formal conventionalities of aristocratic society. He realized that his native element was the free air of the country; so, after gratifying his longing to visit the historic shrines of his native land, he returned to Ayrshire, and took a farm called Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith. To this home he brought his wife, Jean Armour, to whom he had been secretly married two years before.

In order to secure a comfortable support for his mother, he loaned his brother Gilbert one hundred and eighty pounds for the family at Mossgiel. The remainder of the proceeds from the sale of his poems was consumed in an unsuccessful effort to make his own farming profitable. After three years of fruitless labor, he gave up the struggle and removed to the town of Dumfries, supporting his family upon fifty pounds a year, the

salary of an exciseman, or collector of tax duties, — a government appointment which his friends had managed to secure for him.

Many of the sweetest of the songs of Burns were composed in the last five years of his life at Dumfries. About one hundred of these were written at the request of the publisher of a work entitled *The Melodies of Scotland*. For this labor, which rendered the *Melodies* immortal, Burns received a shawl for his wife, a picture representing *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and five pounds. The poet wrote an indignant letter, and never afterwards wrote for money.

By nature, Robert Burns was fitted to shine in society; he loved company, and his "merry note" and brilliant wit made him a general favorite. It is told that, while he was engaged in his excise duties, if he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from cellar to garret, and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled round the ingle; the largest punch-bowl was produced, and every eye was turned expectantly towards their favorite entertainer. "The highest gentry in the neighborhood, when bent on special merriment, did not think the occasion complete unless the wit and eloquence of Burns were called in to enliven their carousals."

The genius of Burns scintillated till the last, but excesses and exposure bore their inevitable fruit, and Robert Burns, the sweet singer of Scotland, the master lyric writer of the world, passed away at the early age of thirty-seven, July 21, 1796.

The reverent love which his countrymen feel for their poet is shown in the fact that they are said to sing by turns the Psalms of David and the songs of Burns. The truth, beauty, and power of the songs of the poet ploughman, who rhymed for love of beauty and of truth, have found an abiding place in the heart of the world. "Here is old Scotia's thistle bloomed out into a flower so fair that its beauty and perfume fill the world with joy."

WORDS APPRECIATIVE OF ROBERT BURNS.

"Other poets may be the favorites of a class or a clique; Burns is the favorite of the whole world. The secret of this universal favor is to be found in the fact that he was born in a lowly condition of life, close to our mother earth, and gave utterance to the rudimentary sentiments, the abiding sorrows, and the constant yearnings of human nature." — ALFRED AUSTIN.

"To homely subjects, Burns communicated the rich commentary of his nature; they were all steeped in Burns, and they interest us, not in themselves, but because they have been passed through the spirit of so genuine and vigorous a man." — ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

"Give lettered pomp to teeth of time,
So 'Bonnie Doon' but tarry;
Blot out the epic's stately rhyme,
But spare his 'Highland Mary.'"
— JOHN G. WHITTIER.

"Of all our poets, lyric and idyllic, he is most truly nature's darling; his pictures were life; his voice was freedom; his heart was strength and tenderness." — E. C. STEDMAN.

"Every poet who, like Burns, increases that larger tenderness of the heart, which not only loves men, but hates to give pain to the lower animals, is, so far at least, religious in his poetry. No poet ever more deeply felt the sorrows of created things than Burns." — STOPFORD BROOKE.

"It is not easy to define and describe Burns's service to the world. It is plain that he interpreted Scotland as no other country has been revealed by a kindred genius. The sun of Scotland sparkles in his verse; the birds of Scotland sing in it; its breezes rustle; its waters murmur. Each timorous 'wee beastie,' the 'ourie cattle,' and the 'silly sheep' are softly penned and gathered in this all-embracing fold of song. The

poet touches every scene and sound, every thought and feeling — but the refrain of all is Scotland. To what other man was it ever given so to transfigure the country of his birth and love? Every bird and flower, every dale and river, whispers and repeats his name, and the word *Scotland* is sweeter because of Robert Burns.

"In setting words to Scotch melodies, Burns turns to music the emotions common to humanity, and so he passes from the exclusive love of Scotland into the reverence of the world." — G. W. Curtis.

"A certain rugged, sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written; a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and labored amidst that he describes. Those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves, and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. . . . Over the lowest provinces of man's existence, he pours the glory of his own soul, and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest." — Carlyle.

"Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He rules mid winter snows, and where
Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of man
His power survives."

— Wordsworth.

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SELECTIONS FROM BURNS.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.

THE sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roarin play,
An' hunger'd maukin taen her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin-tree
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And whan the day had clos'd his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin;
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae-thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank, and clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring, 'blockhead! coof!'
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I, henceforth, would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When click! the string the snick did draw;
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest worth, she blusht,
An' steppèd ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows,

I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A 'hair-brain'd, sentimental trace,'
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honor.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonnie Jean
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
Nane else came near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well-known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds,
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;

And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their Suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour, mark him well!
Bold Richardton's heroic swell;
The chief, on Sark who glorious fell
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colors strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,
(Fit haunts for Friendship or for Love
In musing mood,)
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck reverential awe
The learned Sire and Son I saw:
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore;
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Brydon's brave ward I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming Fair;
A whisp'ring throb did witness bear,
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

'All hail! my own inspirèd bard!
In me thy native Muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

'Know, the great Genius of this land
Has many a light, aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labors ply.

'They Scotia's race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard — a darling care —
The tuneful art.

'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

'And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

'Hence, Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence, Dempster's zeal-inspired tongue:
Hence, sweet harmonious Beattie sung
His "Minstrel lays;"
Or tore, with noble ardor stung,
The sceptic's bays.

'To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,

The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

'When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

'Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil,
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

'Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

'Of these am I — Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame
Thy natal hour.

'With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy litfle early ways,
Thy rudely-caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,

Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

'I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar,
Struck thy young eye.

'Or when the deep green-mantl'd earth
Warm-cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

'When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

'When youthful love, warm-blushing strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

'I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

'I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

'Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape-glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

'Yet, all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army-shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

'Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

'To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of Man,
With soul erect;
And trust, the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

'And wear thou *this*'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:

The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ. OF AYR.

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.
Gray.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays:
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
  Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
  To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnilie,
  His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
  Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
  At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
  A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
  In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
  Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
  An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
  Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
  Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
  Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
  The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
An' mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
  An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
'An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
  An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!

Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!'

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad came o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
Wi' heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
'If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare.
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,

Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood;
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheefu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps 'Dundee's' wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive 'Martyrs,' worthy of the name;
Or noble 'Elgin' beets the heav'nward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;

But haply, in some cottage far apart,
  May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
  The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
  And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
  And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
  For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
  That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
  'An honest man's the noblest work of God:'
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
  The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
  Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
  For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
  Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
  From luxury's contagion, weak and vile;
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
  A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

  Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
  That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart;
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,

Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert,
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

EPITAPH ON MY EVER HONORED FATHER.

O YE, whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man — to vice alone a foe;
For 'ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.'

TO WILLIAM SIMPSON,

SCHOOLMASTER, OCHILTREE.

MAY, 1785.

GAT your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie,
Your flatterin strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it,
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented
On my poor Musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin terms ye've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

Auld Coila, now, may fidge fu' fain,
She's gotten bardies o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle,
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan.

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon,
Naebody sings.

Th' Ilissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!
But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,

Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae Suthron billies.

At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
Or glorious dy'd.

O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods,
Wi' wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trottin burn's meander,
An' no think lang;

O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch, an' strive,
Let me fair Nature's face descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, 'my rhyme-composing brither!'
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal:
May Envy wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid, fat braxies
While terra firma, on her axis,
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.

STANZAS FROM EPISTLES TO JOHN LAPRAIK, AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie whiddin seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom, in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin,
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin;
And there was muckle fun and jokin,
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'
At 'sang about.'

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But, by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

'O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,

Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!'

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
'The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!'

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785.

WEE, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green;
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell —
Till crash! the cruel coulter past,
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

A WINTER NIGHT.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you,
From seasons such as these?

Shakespeare.

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glow'r,
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor Labor sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or thro' the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.

List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing!
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phœbe, in her midnight reign,
Dark muffl'd, view'd the dreary plain;
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain,
Slow, solemn, stole —

'Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than heav'n-illumin'd man on brother man bestows!
See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder o'er a land!
Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefin'd,
Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below!

Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfied keen nature's clam'rous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays himself to sleep,
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers, piles the drifty heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where Guilt and poor Misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushèd low
By cruel Fortune's undeservèd blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress;
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!'

I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impress'd my mind—
Thro' all His works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind,
The most resembles God.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure

Thy slender stem.
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield,
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink,
Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine — no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

ON SCARING SOME WATER FOWL

IN LOCH-TURIT, A WILD SCENE AMONG THE HILLS OF OCHTERTYRE.

Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake?
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties? —
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:

Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.
Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.
Man, your proud, usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below;
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.
The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels.
But man, to whom alone is giv'n
A ray direct from pitying Heav'n,
Glories in his heart humane —
And creatures for his pleasure slain.
In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wand'ring swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays,
Far from human haunts and ways;
All on Nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.
Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his pow'rs you scorn;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.

VERSES

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WOODS NEAR DRUMLANRIG.

As on the banks o' wandering Nith,
  Ae smiling simmer-morn I strayed,
And traced its bonnie howes and haughs,
  Where linties sang and lambkins played,
I sat me down upon a craig,
  And drank my fill o' fancy's dream,
When, from the eddying deep below,
  Uprose the genius of the stream.

Dark, like the frowning rock, his brow,
  And troubled, like his wintry wave,
And deep, as sughs the boding wind
  Amang his caves, the sigh he gave—
'And come ye here, my son,' he cried,
  'To wander in my birken shade?
To muse some favorite Scottish theme,
  Or sing some favorite Scottish maid?

'There was a time, it's nae lang syne,
  Ye might hae seen me in my pride,
When a' my banks sae bravely saw
  Their woody pictures in my tide;
When hanging beech and spreading elm
  Shaded my stream sae clear and cool,
And stately oaks their twisted arms
  Threw broad and dark across the pool;

'When glinting, through the trees, appeared
  The wee white cot aboon the mill,
And peacefu' rose its ingle reek,
  That slowly curlèd up the hill.
But now the cot is bare and cauld,

Its branchy shelter's lost and gane,
And scarce a stinted birk is left
To shiver in the blast its lane.'

'Alas!' said I, 'what ruefu' chance
Has twined ye o' your stately trees?
Has laid your rocky bosom bare,
Has stripped the cleeding o' your braes?
Was it the bitter eastern blast,
That scatters blight in early spring?
Or was't the wil'-fire scorched their boughs,
Or canker-worm wi' secret sting?'

'Nae eastlin blast,' the sprite replied;
'It blew na here sae fierce and fell,
And on my dry and halesome banks
Nae canker-worms get leave to dwell:
Man! cruel man!' the genius sighed —
As through the cliffs he sank him down —
'The worm that gnawed my bonnie trees,
That reptile wears a ducal crown.'

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER,

TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My Lord, I know your noble ear
Woe ne'er assails in vain;
Embolden'd thus, I beg you'll hear
Your humble slave complain,
How saucy Phœbus' scorching beams,
In flaming summer-pride,
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,
And drink my crystal tide.

The lightly-jumping glowrin trouts,
That thro' my waters play,
If, in their random, wanton spouts,
They near the margin stray;
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,
I'm scorching up so shallow,
They're left the whitening stanes amang,
In gasping death to wallow.

Last day I grat wi' spite and teen,
As Poet Burns came by,
That to a bard I should be seen
Wi' half my channel dry:
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,
Even as I was he shor'd me;
But had I in my glory been,
He, kneeling, wad ador'd me.

Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,
In twisting strength I rin;
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,
Wild-roaring o'er a linn:
Enjoying large each spring and well
As Nature gave them me,
I am, altho' I say't mysel,
Worth gaun a mile to see.

Would then my noble master please
To grant my highest wishes,
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees,
And bonnie spreading bushes.
Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock, warbling wild,
Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, Music's gayest child,
Shall sweetly join the choir:
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear,
The mavis mild and mellow;
The robin pensive Autumn cheer,
In all her locks of yellow.

This too, a covert shall ensure,
To shield them from the storm;
And coward maukin sleep secure,
Low in her grassy form:
Here shall the shepherd make his seat
To weave his crown of flow'rs;
Or find a sheltering safe retreat,
From prone-descending show'rs.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,
Some musing bard may stray,
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,
And misty mountain gray;
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild-chequering thro' the trees,
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
Their shadows' wat'ry bed!
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest
My craggy cliffs adorn;
And, for the little songster's nest,
The close embow'ring thorn.

So may Old Scotia's darling hope,
Your little angel band,
Spring like their fathers, up to prop
Their honor'd native land!
So may thro' Albion's farthest ken,
To social-flowing glasses
The grace be — 'Athole's honest men,
And Athole's bonnie lasses!'

THE BRIGS OF AYR.

A POEM.

INSCRIBED TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ., AYR.

THE simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from ev'ry bough;
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush;
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn bush;
The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,
Or deep-ton'd plovers gray, wild-whistling o'er the hill;
Shall he — nurst in the peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy independence bravely bred,
By early poverty to hardship steel'd,
And train'd to arms in stern Misfortune's field —
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes?
Or labor hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating prose?
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward.
Still, if some patron's gen'rous care he trace,
Skill'd in the secret, to bestow with grace;

When Ballantyne befriends his humble name,
And hands the rustic stranger up to fame,
With heartfelt throes his grateful bosom swells,
The godlike bliss, to give, alone excels.

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter-hap,
And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap;
Potato-bings are snuggèd up frae skaith
O' coming Winter's biting, frosty breath;
The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer toils,
Unnumber'd buds an' flow'rs delicious spoils,
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen piles,
Are doom'd by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils, smoor'd wi' brimstone reek:
The thund'ring guns are heard on ev'ry side,
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;
The feather'd field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:
(What warm, poetic heart, but inly bleeds,
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)
Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs;
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except perhaps the Robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noontide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.

'Twas in that season, when a simple Bard,
Unknown and poor — simplicity's reward —
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of Ayr,
By whim inspir'd, or haply prest wi' care,
He left his bed and took his wayward route,
And down by Simpson's wheel'd the left about:
(Whether impell'd by all-directing Fate,

To witness what I after shall narrate;
Or whether, rapt in meditation high,
He wander'd out he knew not where nor why:)
The drowsy Dungeon-clock had number'd two,
And Wallace Tow'r had sworn the fact was true:
The tide-swoln firth, wi' sullen-sounding roar,
Through the still night dash'd hoarse along the shore:
All else was hush'd as Nature's closèd e'e;
The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept, gently-crusting, owre the glittering stream. —
When, lo! on either hand the list'ning Bard,
The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard;
Two dusky forms dart thro' the midnight air,
Swift as the gos drives on the wheeling hare;
Ane on th' Auld Brig his airy shape uprears,
The ither flutters o'er the rising piers:
Our warlock Rhymer instantly descry'd
The Sprites that owre the Brigs of Ayr preside.
(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;
Fays, spunkies, kelpies, a', they can explain them,
And ev'n the vera de'ils they brawly ken them.)
Auld Brig appear'd o' ancient Pictish race,
The vera wrinkles Gothic in his face:
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,
Yet, teughly doure, he bade an unco bang.
New Brig was buskit, in a braw new coat,
That he, at Lon'on, frae ane Adams got;
In's hand five taper staves as smooth's a bead,
Wi' virls an' whirlygigums at the head.
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,
Spying the time-worn flaws in ev'ry arch;
It chanc'd his new-come neebor took his e'e,
And e'en a vex'd and angry heart had he!
Wi' thieveless sneer to see his modish mien,
He, down the water, gies him this guid-e'en:

AULD BRIG.

I doubt na, frien', ye'll think ye're nae sheep-shank,
Ance ye were streekit owre frae bank to bank!
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me,—
Tho', faith! that date, I doubt, ye'll never see,—
There'll be, if that day come, I'll wad a boddle,
Some fewer whigmeleeries in your noddle.

NEW BRIG.

Auld Vandal, ye but show your little mense,
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor, narrow foot-path of a street,
Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,
Your ruin'd, formless bulk o' stane and lime,
Compare wi' bonnie Brigs o' modern time?
There's men of taste wou'd tak the Ducat-stream,
Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim,
Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the view
O' sic an ugly, Gothic hulk as you.

AULD BRIG.

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!
This mony a year I've stood the flood an' tide;
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a brig, when ye're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' spotting thowes,
In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;

While crashing ice, borne on the roaring spate,
Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;
And from Glenbuck, down to the Ratton-key,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea;
Then down ye'll hurl (de'il nor ye never rise!)
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.
A lesson sadly teaching, to your cost,
That Architecture's noble art is lost!

NEW BRIG.

Fine architecture, trowth, I needs must say't o't;
The Lord be thankit that we've tint the gate o't!
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,
Hanging with threat'ning jut, like precipices:
O'er arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves:
Windows and doors in nameless sculptures drest,
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;
Forms like some bedlam Statuary's dream,
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;
Forms might be worshipp'd on the bended knee,
And still the second dread command be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.
Mansions that would disgrace the building taste
Of any mason reptile, bird, or beast;
Fit only for a doited monkish race,
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace,
Or cuifs of later times, wha held the notion,
That sullen gloom was sterling, true devotion;
Fancies that our guid Brugh denies protection,
And soon may they expire, unblest with resurrection!

AULD BRIG.

O ye, my dear-remember'd, ancient yealings,
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!

Ye worthy Proveses, an' mony a Bailie,
Wha in the paths o' righteousness did toil ay;
Ye dainty Deacons, an' ye douce Conveeners,
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners!
Ye godly Councils wha hae blest this town;
Ye godly Brethren o' the sacred gown,
Wha meekly gie your hurdies to the smiters;
And (what would now be strange) ye godly Writers:
A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo,
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do?
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,
To see each melancholy alteration;
And agonizing, curse the time and place
When ye begat the base, degen'rate race!
Nae langer rev'rend Men, their country's glory,
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story:
Nae langer thrifty citizens, an' douce,
Meet owre a pint, or in the Council-house;
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless gentry,
The herryment and ruin of the country;
Men, three-parts made by tailors and by barbers,
Wha waste your weel-hain'd gear on damn'd new brigs and harbors!

NEW BRIG.

Now haud you there! for faith ye've said enough,
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through;
As for your priesthood, I shall say but little,
Corbies and Clergy are a shot right kittle:
But, under favor o' your langer beard,
Abuse o' magistrates might weel be spar'd:
To liken them to your auld-warld squad,
I must needs say, comparisons are odd.
In Ayr, wag-wits nae mair can have a handle
To mouth 'a citizen,' a term o' scandal:
Nae mair the council waddles down the street,

In all the pomp of ignorant conceit;
Men wha grew wise priggin owre hops an' raisins,
Or gather'd lib'ral views in bonds and seisins.
If haply Knowledge, on a random tramp,
Had shor'd them wi' a glimmer of his lamp,
And would to Common-sense for once betray'd them,
Plain, dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them.

What farther clishmaclaver might been said,
What bloody wars, if sprites had blood to shed,
No man can tell; but all before their sight
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danc'd;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet:
While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.
O had M'Lauchlan, thairm-inspiring sage,
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,
When thro' his dear strathspeys they bore with Highland rage,
Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,
The lover's raptur'd joys or bleeding cares:
How would his Highland lug been nobler fir'd,
And ev'n his matchless hand with finer touch inspir'd!
No guess could tell what instrument appear'd,
But all the soul of Music's self was heard;
Harmonious concert rung in every part,
While simple melody pour'd moving on the heart.

The Genius of the Stream in front appears,
A venerable chief, advanc'd in years;
His hoary head with water-lilies crown'd,
His manly leg with garter tangle bound.
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;

Then, crown'd with flow'ry hay, came Rural Joy,
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,
Led yellow Autumn wreath'd with nodding corn;
Then Winter's time-bleach'd locks did hoary show,
By Hospitality with cloudless brow;
Next follow'd Courage with his martial stride,
From where the Feal wild-woody coverts hide;
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair:
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode
From simple Catrine, their long-lov'd abode:
Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazel wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken, iron instruments of death:
At sight of whom our sprites forgat their kindling wrath.

TAM O' SHANTER.

A TALE.

Of Brownyis and of Bogilis full is this Buke.
Gawin Douglas.

When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We thinkna on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,

Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.
This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonnie lasses).

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou wast a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum!
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was na sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on:
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesy'd that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter;
And aye the ale was growing better:

The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favors, secret, sweet, and precious:
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy:
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white — then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm. —
Nae man can tether time or tide; —
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The de'il had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;

Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—
By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane:
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.—
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.—
Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na de'ils a boddle.
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.

A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl. —
Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip slight
Each in its cauld hand held a light,—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet-airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae the rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!

Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!
But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwooddie hags wad spean a foal,
Lowping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.
But Tam kenn'd what was what fu' brawlie,
There was ae winsome wench and walie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kenn'd on Carrick shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie. —
Ah! little kenn'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!
But here my muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was, and strang),
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark:

And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.
As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When, 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skreech and hollow.
Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig:
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they darena cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.
Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, tak heed;
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

TO JAMES SMITH.

Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of Life, and solder of Society!
I owe thee much. ———

Blair.

DEAR Smith, the slee'est, paukie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief,
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef
Owre human hearts.
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
And ev'ry star that blinks aboon,
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon
Just gaun to see you;
And ev'ry ither pair that's done,
Mair taen I'm wi you.

* * * * * *

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But in requit,
Has blest me with a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's taen a sklent,
To try my fate in guid black prent;
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries, 'Hoolie!
I red you, honest man, tak tent!
Ye'll shaw your folly.

'There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensured their debtors,

A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages.'

Then fareweel hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, wi' tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' Death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound an' hale;
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave Care o'er side!
And large, before Enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy-land,
Where pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Makes hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic-wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd,
See, crazy, weary, joyless Eild,
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin, hirplin owre the field,
Wi' creepin pace.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin,
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin;
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin,
An' social noise;
An' fareweel dear deluding woman,
The joy of joys!

O life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves:
And tho' the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat;
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain;
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some Fortune chase;
Keen Hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey;
Then cannie, in some cozie place,
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin;

To right or left, eternal swervin,
They zig-zag on;
Till curst with age, obscure an' starvin,
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce wi' peevish, poor complaining!
Is Fortune's fickle Luna waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, 'Ye Pow'rs!' and warm implore,
'Tho' I should wander Terra o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Ay rowth o' rhymes.

'Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
And maids of honor;
And yill an' whisky gie to cairds,
Until they sconner.

'A title, Dempster merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent per cent;
But gie me real, sterling wit,
And I'm content.

'While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,
Wi' cheerfu' face,

As lang's the Muses dinna fail
To say the grace.'

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows
As weel's I may;
Sworn foe to Sorrow, Care, and Prose
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk, that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm, and cool,
Compar'd wi' you — O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke!

Nae hair-brain'd sentimental traces,
In your unletter'd, nameless faces!
In arioso trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But gravissimo, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise,
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattling squad:
I see you upward cast your eyes —
Ye ken the road. —

Whilst I — but I shall haud me there —
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where —
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content with you to mak a pair,
Where'er I gang.

EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET.

JANUARY, 1784.

WHILE winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down, to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely, westlin jingle.
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker,
To see their cursèd pride.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whyles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair't:
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear,
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
'Mair spier na, nor fear na,'
Auld age ne'er mind a feg;
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!

Yet then content could mak us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
  Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
  Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
  Has aye some cause to smile:
    And mind still, you'll find still,
      A comfort this nae sma';
    Nae mair then, we'll care then,
      Nae farther can we fa'.

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
  But either house or hal'?
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
  Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
  And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
  To see the coming year:
    On braes when we please, then,
      We'll sit and sowth a tune;
    Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,
      And sing't when we hae done.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
  To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in making muckle, *mair:*
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
  To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
  And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,

But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay,
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,
Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless, and fearless,
Of either heav'n or hell!
Esteeming, and deeming
It's a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They mak us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My Davie or my Jean.

O, how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank and file,
Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
Were glowrin owre my pen.
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
Till ance he's fairly het;
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and limp,
An rin' an unco fit:
But lest then the beast then,
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither;
The *Rigid Righteous* is a fool,
The *Rigid Wise* anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin.

Solomon.— Eccles. vii. 16.

O YE wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebor's fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heapet happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable Core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door,
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ;
Discount what scant occasion gave
That purity ye pride in,

And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,
What raging must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks an unco leeway.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *Why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord — its various tone,
Each spring — its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted.*

ANSWER TO VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE POET

BY THE GUIDWIFE OF WAUCHOPE HOUSE.

MARCH, 1787.

Guidwife,

I MIND it weel, in early date,
When I was beardless, young and blate,
An' first could thresh the barn,
Or haud a yokin at the pleugh,
An' tho' forfoughten sair eneugh,
Yet unco proud to learn:
When first amang the yellow corn
A man I reckon'd was,
And wi' the lave ilk merry morn
Could rank my rig and lass,
Still shearing, and clearing
The tither stookèd raw,
Wi' claivers, an' haivers,
Wearing the day awa:

Ev'n then a wish, (I mind its power,)
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast;
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan, or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough bur-thistle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd the weeder-clips aside,
An' spar'd the symbol dear:
No nation, no station,
My envy e'er could raise;
A Scot still, but blot still,
I knew nae higher praise.

But still the elements o' sang
In formless jumble, right an' wrang,
  Wild floated in my brain;
Till on that har'st I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
  She rous'd the forming strain:
I see her yet, the sonsie quean,
  That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pauky een,
  That gart my heart-strings tingle;
    I firèd, inspirèd,
      At ev'ry kindling keek,
    But bashing, and dashing,
      I fearèd aye to speak.

Health to the sex, ilk guid chiel says,
Wi' merry dance in winter days,
  An' we to share in common:
The gust o' joy, the balm of woe,
The saul o' life, the heav'n below,
  Is rapture-giving woman.
Ye surly sumphs, who hate the name,
  Be mindfu' o' your mither:
She, honest woman, may think shame
  That ye're connected with her.
    Ye're wae men, ye're nae men,
      That slight the lovely dears;
    To shame ye, disclaim ye,
      Ilk honest birkie swears.

For you, no bred to barn or byre,
Wha sweetly tune the Scottish lyre,
  Thanks to you for your line:
The marlèd plaid ye kindly spare,
By me should gratefully be ware;
  'Twad please me to the nine.

I'd be more vauntie o' my hap,
Douce hingin' owre my curple,
Than ony ermine ever lap,
Or proud imperial purple.
Fareweel then, lang heal then,
An' plenty be your fa':
May losses and crosses
Ne'er at your hallan ca'.

PROLOGUE,

SPOKEN BY MR. WOODS, ON HIS BENEFIT NIGHT, MONDAY, APRIL 16, 1787.

When by a generous public's kind acclaim,
That dearest meed is granted — honest fame;
When here your favor is the actor's lot,
Nor even the man in private life forgot;
What breast so dead to heav'nly virtue's glow,
But heaves impassion'd with the grateful throe?
Poor is the task to please a barb'rous throng,
It needs no Siddons' power in Southern's song:
But here an ancient nation, fam'd afar
For genius, learning high, as great in war —
Hail Caledonia! name for ever dear!
Before whose sons I'm honor'd to appear!
Where every science, every nobler art
That can inform the mind or mend the heart,
Is known; as grateful nations oft have found,
Far as the rude barbarian marks the bound.
Philosophy, no idle, pedant dream,
Here holds her search, by heaven-taught Reason's beam,
Here History paints with elegance and force,
The tide of Empire's fluctuating course;

Here Douglas forms wild Shakespeare into plan,
And Harley rouses all the god in man.
When well-form'd taste, and sparkling wit unite,
With manly lore, or female beauty bright
(Beauty, where faultless symmetry and grace,
Can only charm us in the second place),
Witness my heart, how oft with panting fear,
As on this night, I've met these judges here!
But still the hope Experience taught to live,
Equal to judge — you're candid to forgive.
No hundred-headed Riot here we meet,
With decency and law beneath his feet,
Nor Insolence assumes fair Freedom's name;
Like Caledonians, you applaud or blame.
O Thou, dread Power! whose empire-giving hand
Has oft been stretch'd to shield the honor'd land,
Strong may she glow with all her ancient fire;
May every son be worthy of his sire;
Firm may she rise with generous disdain
At Tyranny's, or direr Pleasure's chain;
Still self-dependent in her native shore,
Bold may she brave grim Danger's loudest roar,
Till Fate the curtain drop on worlds to be no more.

CASTLE GORDON.

STREAMS that glide in orient plains
Never bound by winter's chains!
Glowing here on golden sands,
There commix'd with foulest stains
From Tyranny's empurpled bands:
These, their richly-gleaming waves,
I leave to tyrants and their slaves;
Give me the stream that sweetly laves
The banks by Castle Gordon.

Spicy forests, ever gay,
Shading from the burning ray
Hapless wretches sold to toil,
Or the ruthless native's way,
Bent on slaughter, blood, and spoil:
Woods that ever verdant wave,
I leave the tyrant and the slave;
Give me the groves that lofty brave
The storms, by Castle Gordon.

Wildly here without control,
Nature reigns and rules the whole;
In that sober pensive mood,
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood;
Life's poor day I'll musing rave,
And find at night a sheltering cave,
Where waters flow and wild woods wave,
By bonnie Castle Gordon.

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH.

EDINA! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!
From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,
As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter in thy honor'd shade.

Here Wealth still swells the golden tide,
As busy Trade his labors plies;
There Architecture's noble pride
Bids elegance and splendor rise;

Here Justice, from her native skies,
High wields her balance and her rod;
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,
Seeks Science in her coy abode.

Thy sons, Edina, social, kind,
With open arms the stranger hail;
Their views enlarg'd, their lib'ral mind,
Above the narrow, rural vale;
Attentive still to Sorrow's wail,
Or modest Merit's silent claim:
And never may their sources fail!
And never Envy blot their name!

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn,
Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
Dear as the raptur'd thrill of joy!
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work indeed divine!

There watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold vet'ran, gray in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:
The pond'rous wall and massy bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,
Have oft withstood assailing war,
And oft repell'd th' invader's shock.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,
I view that noble, stately dome,
Where Scotia's kings of other years,
Fam'd heroes, had their royal home:

Alas, how changed the times to come!
Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild-wand'ring roam!
Tho' rigid Law cries out, "'twas just!'

Wild beats my heart, to trace your steps,
Whose ancestors, in days of yore,
Thro' hostile ranks and ruin'd gaps
Old Scotia's bloody lion bore:
Ev'n I who sing in rustic lore,
Haply my sires have left their shed,
And fac'd grim Danger's loudest roar,
Bold-following where your fathers led!

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!
From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,
As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter in thy honor'd shade.

LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out o'er the grassy lea:
Now Phœbus cheers the crystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the weary wight
That fast in durance lies.

Now laverocks wake the merry morn,
  Aloft on dewy wing;
The merle, in his noontide bow'r,
  Makes woodland echoes ring;
The mavis mild wi' many a note,
  Sings drowsy day to rest:
In love and freedom they rejoice,
  Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
  The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
  And milk-white is the slae:
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
  May rove their sweets amang;
But I the Queen of a' Scotland,
  Maun lie in prison strang.

I was the Queen o' bonnie France,
  Where happy I hae been,
Fu' lightly rase I in the morn,
  As blythe lay down at e'en:
And I'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
  And mony a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands,
  And never-ending care.

But as for thee, thou false woman,
  My sister and my fae,
Grim Vengeance, yet, shall whet a sword
  That thro' thy soul shall gae:
The weeping blood in woman's breast
  Was never known to thee;
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
  Frae woman's pitying ee.

My son! my son! may kinder stars
  Upon thy fortune shine;
And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
  That ne'er wad blink on mine!
God keep thee frae thy mother's faes,
  Or turn their hearts to thee:
And where thou meet'st thy mother's friend,
  Remember him for me!

Oh! soon, to me, may summer-suns
  Nae mair light up the morn!
Nae mair, to me, the autumn winds
  Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death
  Let winter round me rave;
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring,
  Bloom on my peaceful grave!

ODE FOR GENERAL WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

No Spartan tube, no Attic shell,
  No lyre Æolian I awake:
'Tis liberty's bold note I swell,
  Thy harp, Columbia, let me take!
See gathering thousands, while I sing,
A broken chain exulting bring,
  And dash it in a tyrant's face,
And dare him to his very beard,
And tell him he no more is feared—
  No more the despot of Columbia's race!
A tyrant's proudest insults braved,
They shout—a People freed! They hail an Empire saved.

Where is man's godlike form?
  Where is that brow erect and bold—

That eye that can unmov'd behold
The wildest rage, the loudest storm
That e'er created fury dared to raise?
Avaunt! thou caitiff, servile, base,
That tremblest at a despot's nod,
Yet, crouching under the iron rod,
Canst laud the hand that struck th' insulting blow!
Art thou of man's Imperial line?
Dost boast that countenance divine?
Each skulking feature answers, No!
But come, ye sons of Liberty,
Columbia's offspring, brave as free,
In danger's hour still flaming in the van,
Ye know, and dare maintain, the Royalty of Man!

Alfred! on thy starry throne,
Surrounded by the tuneful choir,
The bards that erst have struck the patriot lyre,
And roused the freeborn Briton's soul of fire,
No more thy England own!
Dare injured nations form the great design,
To make detested tyrants bleed?
Thy England execrates the glorious deed!
Beneath her hostile banners waving,
Every pang of honor braving,
England in thunder calls, 'The tyrant's cause is mine!'
That hour accurst how did the fiends rejoice
And hell, through all her confines, raise the exulting voice,
That hour which saw the generous English name
Linkt with such damnèd deeds of everlasting shame!

Thee, Caledonia! thy wild heaths among,
Famed for the martial deed, the heaven-taught song,
To thee I turn with swimming eyes;
Where is that soul of Freedom fled?
Immingled with the mighty dead,
Beneath that hallow'd turf where Wallace lies!

Hear it not, WALLACE! in thy bed of death.
Ye babbling winds! in silence sweep,
Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,
Nor give the coward secret breath!
Is this the ancient Caledonian form,
Firm as the rock, resistless as the storm?
Show me that eye which shot immortal hate,
Blasting the despot's proudest bearing:
Show me that arm which, nerv'd with thundering fate,
Crush'd Usurpation's boldest daring!—
Dark-quenched as yonder sinking star,
No more that glance lightens afar;
That palsied arm no more whirls on the waste of war.

INSCRIPTION FOR AN ALTAR

TO INDEPENDENCE, AT KERROUGHTRY, SEAT OF MR. HERON, WRITTEN IN SUMMER, 1795.

THOU of an independent mind,
With soul resolv'd, with soul resign'd;
Prepar'd Power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here.

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL

OVER THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE PARLOR OF THE INN AT KENMORE, TAYMOUTH.

ADMIRING Nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
Th' abodes of covey'd grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
Till fam'd Breadalbane opens on my view.—
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild-scatter'd, clothe their ample sides;
Th' outstretching lake, embosom'd 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
The Tay meand'ring sweet in infant pride,
The palace rising on his verdant side;
The lawns wood-fring'd in Nature's native taste;
The hillocks dropt in Nature's careless haste;
The arches striding o'er the new-born stream;
The village, glittering in the noontide beam—
* * * * * * * *
Poetic ardors in my bosom swell,
Lone wand'ring by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
Th' incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—
* * * * * * * *
Here Poesy might wake her heav'n-taught lyre,
And look through Nature with creative fire;
Here, to the wrongs of Fate half reconcil'd,
Misfortune's lighten'd steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter, rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck Grief might heav'nward stretch her scan,
And injur'd Worth forget and pardon man.
* * * * * * * *

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

MAY, 1786.

I LANG hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Tho' it should serve nae ither end
Than just a kind memento;
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps, it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps, turn out a sermon.

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad,
And, Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

I'll no say, men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked:
But och! mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted!

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we should na censure,
For still th' important end of life
They equally may answer;

A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neebor's part,
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Aye free, aff han' your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpened, sly inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it;
I wave the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard o' concealing;
But och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justify'd by honor;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honor grip,
Let that aye be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause —

Debar a' side pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere,
Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest-driv'n,
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n
Is sure a noble anchor!

Adieu, dear, amiable youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, 'God send you speed,'
Still daily to grow wiser;
And may ye better reck the rede,
Than ever did th' adviser!

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,

One ev'ning as I wander'd forth
Along the Banks of Ayr,
I spy'd a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

'Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?'
Began the rev'rend Sage?
'Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or, haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

'The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labor to support
A haughty lordling's pride;
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.

'O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force give nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

'Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;

Man then is useful to his kind,
  Supported is his right,
But see him on the edge of life,
  With cares and sorrows worn,
Then age and want, — Oh! ill-match'd pair! —
  Show man was made to mourn.

'A few seem favorites of fate,
  In pleasure's lap carest;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
  Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in ev'ry land
  Are wretched and forlorn;
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
  That man was made to mourn.

'Many and sharp the num'rous ills
  Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
  Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
  The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
  Makes countless thousands mourn!

'See yonder poor, o'erlabor'd wigh
  So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
  To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
  The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
  And helpless offspring mourn.

'If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,
  By Nature's law design'd,

Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty, or scorn?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn?

'Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast;
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

'O Death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden mourn!'

A PRAYER, UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey Thy high behest.

Sure, Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then, man my soul with firm resolves
To bear and not repine!

WINTER.

A DIRGE.

THE wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While, tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae:
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Pow'r Supreme, whose mighty scheme
  These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
  Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (Oh! do thou grant
  This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy thou dost deny,
  Assist me to resign.

THE FIRST PSALM.

THE man, in life wherever plac'd,
  Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
  Nor learns their guilty lore:

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
  Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
  Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees
  Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
  And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
  Shall to the ground be cast,
And like the rootless stubble tost,
  Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
  Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
  Shall ne'er be truly blest.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling-place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous globe itself,
Arose at Thy command;

That pow'r which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word; Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought;
Again Thou say'st, 'Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!'

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night—cut down it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

SONGS.

THE AUTHOR'S FAREWELL TO HIS NATIVE COUNTRY.

THE gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The hunter now has left the moor,
The scatter'd coveys meet secure,
While here I wander, prest with care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her rip'ning corn
By early Winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly:
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal, deadly shore;
Tho' death in ev'ry shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear:
But round my heart the ties are bound,

That heart transpierc'd with many a wound:
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
To leave the bonnie banks of Ayr.

Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! Farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those:
The bursting tears my heart declare —
Farewell, the bonnie banks of Ayr!

THE BANKS O' DOON.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed — never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause luver stole my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

AFTON WATER.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
There oft as mild ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flow'rets, she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary.

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance,
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mould'ring now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

AULD LANG SYNE.

SHOULD auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?

CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine,
But we've wander'd mony a weary foot
Sin' auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
From morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO.

JOHN ANDERSON my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo.

MY NANNIE'S AWA.

NOW in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcomes in ilka green shaw;
But to me it's delightless — my Nannie's awa.

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn:
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie — my Nannie's awa.

Thou laverock that springs frae the dews o' the lawn,
The shepherd to warn o' the gray-breaking dawn,

And thou, mellow mavis, that hails the night-fa',
Gie over for pity — my Nannie's awa.

Come autumn sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' nature's decay;
The dark, dreary winter, and wild-driving snaw,
Alane can delight me — now Nannie's awa.

SONG.

THEIR groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom.
Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly, unseen:
For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
A-list'ning the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

Tho' rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave;
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they? — the haunt of the tyrant and slave!
The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,
The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save Love's willing fetters — the chains o' his Jean.

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS.

MY heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of valor, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains high cover'd with snow;
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here:
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

SONNET WRITTEN ON THE AUTHOR'S BIRTHDAY,

ON HEARING A THRUSH SING IN HIS MORNING WALK.

SING on sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on sweet bird, I listen to thy strain,
See aged Winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blythe carol, clears his furrowed brow.

So in lone Poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek Content with light, unanxious heart;
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys —
What wealth could never give nor take away!

Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

BANNOCKBURN.

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
  Or to victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power—
  Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
  Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's King and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or free-man fa'?
  Let him on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
  But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
  Let us do, or die!

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,
  That hangs his head, an' a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
  We dare be poor for a' that!
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
    The rank is but the guinea stamp;
      The man's the gowd for a' that.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
  Wear hodden-gray, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
  A man's a man for a' that.
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
    The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
      Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
  Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
  He's but a coof for a' that:
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      His riband, star, an' a' that,
    The man o' independent mind,
      He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
  A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
  Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      Their dignities, an' a' that,
    The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
      Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

THE PLOUGHMAN.

THE ploughman he's a bonnie lad,
His mind is ever true, jo,
His garters knit below his knee,
His bonnet it is blue, jo.

CHORUS.

Then up wi' my ploughman lad,
And hey, my merry ploughman;
Of a' the trades that I do ken,
Commend me to the ploughman.

My ploughman he comes hame at e'en,
He's aften wat and weary;
Cast off the wat, put on the dry,
And gae to bed, my dearie!
Up wi', &c.

I will wash my ploughman's hose,
And I will dress his o'erly;
I will mak my ploughman's bed,
And cheer him late and early.
Up wi', &c.

I hae been east, I hae been west,
I hae been at Saint Johnston,
The bonniest sight that e'er I saw
Was the ploughman laddie dancin'.
Up wi', &c.

Snaw-white stockin's on his legs,
And siller buckles glancin';
A gude blue bonnet on his head,
And O, but he was handsome!
Up wi', &c.

A BARD'S EPITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave.
Here pause — and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,

And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame,
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend — whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control
Is wisdom's root.

A STANZA FROM THE POEM,

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

O WAD some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And e'en Devotion!

NATURE'S LAW.

A POEM HUMBLY INSCRIBED TO G. H. ESQ.

Great nature spoke — observant man obeyed. — *Pope.*

YE Powers of peace, and peaceful song,
Look down with gracious eyes;
And bless auld Coila, large and long,
With multiplying joys.
Long may she stand to prop the land,
The flow'r of ancient nations;
And Burnses spring, her fame to sing,
To endless generations!

NOTES.

THE VISION. 1786. (Page 1.)

This poem was composed while Burns was living at Mossgiel. Bad crops and wet seasons had brought great discouragement. His work in life seemed of little worth. The *Vision* is one of hope, of recovery of faith in himself, together with a just estimate of his own powers. His intense love of his native heaths and hawthorn glades, as well as his fervid patriotism, breathes through the poem.

Duan: a Gaelic word meaning a *Canto*, or division of a poem.

2. **curlers**: those engaged in the game of *curling*, a favorite winter sport in Scotland. The players drive large circular stones along the ice from mark to mark, called the *tee*. **roarin play**: this refers to the roaring sound made by the curlstone as it is driven over the hollow ice, as well as to the hilarity of the players.

7. **flingin-tree**: a flail.

15. **hoast-provoking smeek**: smoke that tends to excite a cough.

32. **waukit loof**: work-hardened palm.

52. **By that same token**: the holly is common in Scotland. In the selection of the holly, Burns gives evidence of his truth to nature as he knew it. The olive and laurel, generally used by poets as symbols of honor, are classic.

55. **A 'hair-brain'd, sentimental trace'**: these words are quoted from his own poem, *To William Simpson*.

63. **bonnie Jean**: his wife, Jean Armour.

72. **A well-known land**: Scotland.

79–81. **Doon, Irwine, Ayr**: streams in Burns's native shire of Ayr.

86. **An ancient borough**: *Ayr*, which was chartered in the thirteenth century.

98. **a race heroic**: the Wallaces.

103. **His Country's Saviour**: Sir William Wallace.

104. **Richardton**: Adam Wallace of Richardton, cousin to Sir William Wallace.

105. **The chief, on Sark**, etc.: Wallace, laird of Craigie, who fought with Douglas, in the battle of the Sark (1448), and to whose intrepid valor the victory was largely due. He fell, mortally wounded, in that action.

109. **a sceptr'd Pictish shade**: Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is named. Kyle lies between the Ayr and the Irwine.

119. **An aged Judge**: Sir Thomas Miller, president of the Court of Sessions.

122. **The learned Sire and Son**: Dr. Matthew Stewart, a celebrated mathematician; and his son, Dugald Stewart, an eminent metaphysician, and professor at the University of Edinburgh, who had a villa at Catrine, on the Ayr.

127. **Brydon's brave ward**: Colonel Fullarton, who had travelled under the care of Patrick Brydon, author of *A Tour through Sicily and Malta*. He is referred to in line 169 as 'Fullarton, the brave and young.'

170. **Dempster**: a Scotch scholar of the sixteenth century.

171. **Beattie**: a Scotch poet and philosopher of the eighteenth century, and author of a poem entitled *The Minstrel*.

199. **Coila**: the Genius of Kyle, as Burns poetically represents it.

201. **Campbells**: a well-known Scottish clan.

248. **Thomson**: author of *The Seasons*.

250. **Shenstone**: an English poet of the eighteenth century; his best-known poem is *The Schoolmistress*.

251. **Gray**: author of *An Elegy in a Country Churchyard*.

All these poets were especial favorites with Burns.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT. 1785. (Page 10.)

'A sketch of family life more pure, more true, or more touching, never was made. Hard must that man's heart have been, and

opaque his intellect, who, after reading *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, could have looked with disdainful eyes upon any cottage. Scotland was the first object of his revelation — but after Scotland, mankind.' — MRS. OLIPHANT.

'Had Burns written no other poem, this heartfelt rendering of a good week's close in a God-fearing home, sincerely devout, and yet relieved from all suspicion of sermonizing by its humorous touches, would have secured him a permanent place in our literature.'

'This poem is a nobly sincere tribute to the author's reverence for the simple, heartfelt piety of his parents. When he first read it to his brother Gilbert, before its publication, he told Gilbert that his father's, 'Let us worship God,' had always seemed to him peculiarly solemn and venerable.

It is a picture of quiet, every-day, humble life lived in honest labor and the fear of God. The depth and sincerity of the feeling expressed are well attested by Burns's words to Dugald Stewart, as they were taking a morning walk together during the poet's stay in Edinburgh. Stewart says: 'He told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand, who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which they contained.'

In 1787, when the poet was making a tour of the Highlands, he had for a guide a lad, who told him, 'I like best *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, although it made me *greet* [weep] when my father had me to read it to my mother.' On hearing this, Burns replied, 'Well, my callant, I don't wonder at you *greeting* at reading the poem; it made me greet more than once when I was writing it at my father's fireside.'

The prefatory stanza quoted from Gray's *Elegy* strikes the key-note of the change in English poetry, which was brought to its full completion by Burns and Wordsworth. Pope and his school had chosen their themes from the life of the great and that of cities. Gray, in picturing the innate worth of lives lived in obscurity, 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,' showed that the heart of man, however humble, is the true field for poetry.

Burns has used the Spenserian stanza with good effect in this poem.

1. The **friend** to whom this poem is addressed was Robert Aiken, Esq.

2. **No mercenary bard**: in the eighteenth century, authors were accustomed to beg patronage of the rich and titled. They wrote servile, adulatory dedications to these patrons upon whose favor they depended. Burns scorned such fawning. He dedicates this poem to a man above him in social station, not to secure his patronage, but from motives of pure friendship.

99. **sin' lint was i' the bell**: since flax was in flower.

111–113. **Dundee, Martyrs, Elgin**, are familiar hymn-tunes.

113. **beets the flame**: supplies the flame with fuel.

119. **Abram was the friend of God**: see Genesis xii.

120–121. See Exodus xvii. 8–16; also Deuteronomy xxv. 17–19.

122. **the royal bard**: David. See II Samuel xii.

133. **he, who lone in Patmos banishèd**: John the Apostle. See Revelation i. 9.

135. See Revelation xviii.

138. The quotation is from Pope's *Windsor Forest.*

165. Compare Goldsmith's *Deserted Village:* —

> 'Princes and lords may flourish or may fade:
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made.'

166. The quotation is from Pope's *Essay on Man.*

EPITAPH ON MY EVER HONORED FATHER.

(Page 16.)

The death of William Burness occurred at Lochlea, February 13, 1784. These lines by the son are engraved on the father's head-stone in Alloway kirkyard. John Murdoch, the friend and tutor of the boys, said of the father: 'O for a world of men of such dispositions! I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honor and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions. Then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of those we see in Westminster Abbey.'

8. Quoted from *The Deserted Village.*

TO WILLIAM SIMPSON. 1785. (Page 16.)

The person to whom this epistle is addressed was a schoolmaster in the village of Ochiltree. He was a writer of verses too, but they did not rise above the level of mediocrity.

13. **Coila**: See note to line 199 of *The Vision*.

15. **their chanters winna hain**: will not refrain from playing on their instruments.

25. **Ramsay**: a Scotch peasant poet of ability. His most important poem is entitled *The Gentle Shepherd*. **Fergusson**: another poet of Scotland, whose poetry Burns greatly admired, and to whose memory he wrote the following inscription: —

> 'No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
> No "storied urn or animated bust:"
> This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way,
> To pour her sorrows o'er the poet's dust.
>
> 'This tribute, with a tear, now gives
> A brother bard — he can no more bestow:
> But dear to fame thy Song immortal lives,
> A nobler monument than Art can show.'

Only the first four lines of this inscription are cut on the stone, which was erected by Burns himself, in Canongate Churchyard, Edinburgh, to mark the grave of his 'elder brother in misfortune.'

29. **Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon**: 'I am hurt,' Burns says in his memoranda, 'to see the other towns, rivers, woods, and haughs of Scotland immortalized in song, while my dear native country, the ancient baileries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, have never had one Scottish poet of eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes of Ayr, and the heathy, mountainous source and winding sweep of the Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, and Tweed.' In *The Vision*, he has expressed the same feeling.

41. **bure the gree**: bore off the prize; an allusion to Wallace's victories.

47. **red-wat-shod**: walking in blood.

74. **Hog-shouther**: the appearance of a flock of sheep when driven.

'Burns's poetical epistles to his friends are admirable, whether for the touches of satire, the painting of character, or the sincerity of friendship they display.' — HAZLITT.

One writer says: 'I have heard one of our most distinguished poets recite with a sort of ecstasy some of the verses of these epistles, and praise the ease of the language and the happiness of the thoughts.'

STANZAS FROM EPISTLES TO JOHN LAPRAIK.

1785. (Page 19.)

John Lapraik, to whom this epistle is addressed, was sixty years old when Burns wrote these lines of grateful recognition. Lapraik was a lover of the Muse, who had composed a number of true-hearted songs inspired by love of home and native land; but not until he received the encouragement of Burns did he venture to publish his poems. The volume was issued from the press of John Wilson, Kilmarnock, in 1788.

STANZA I. — It is a striking peculiarity of Burns's rhyming epistles that, in many cases, the opening lines, which serve as a sort of date, are a description of the characteristic features of the season in Scotland, mingled with the poet's own feeling of joy in nature. In the present instance, he counts upon a kindred feeling in the 'Old Scottish Bard' to gain a welcome for this letter from 'an unknown frien'.' Burns's second epistle, called out by Lapraik's reply to this, begins in a similar manner: —

> 'While new-ca'd kye rowte[1] at the stake
> An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,[2]
> This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
> To own I'm debtor
> To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
> For his kind letter.'

7. **Fasten-e'en**: the night before Lent. **rockin**: the word is the Scotch for distaff. The *rock*, or *roke*, was portable, and it was customary for the women to take their rocks to their neighbors' houses, to assist the guid-wife in spinning her wool. Burns's

[1] Newly driven kine bellow. [2] A loaded harrow.

brother Gilbert says: 'It was at one of these rockings, at our house, when they had twelve or fifteen young people with their rocks, that Lapraik's song beginning, "When I upon thy bosom lean," was sung, and we were informed who was the author. Upon this Robert wrote his first *Epistle to Lapraik.*'

11–12. **yokin' At 'sang about'**: the custom of singing or reciting ballads in turn, here referred to, is common to all primitive peoples.

STANZA III. — The feeling expressed in this stanza is akin to that in *The Cotter's Saturday Night.* Nowhere are the domestic affections stronger than among the peasantry of Scotland. In the remaining stanzas, Burns has not only justly estimated his own power and range as a poet, but he has also vividly expressed the secret of genius — 'a spark of Nature's fire.'

TO A MOUSE. 1785. (Page 21.)

This poem was composed while Burns was following the plough on the farm at Mossgiel. A farm-hand who was working with him chased the frightened mouse whose nest had been destroyed, and would have killed it with a pattle, or spade, which he held in his hand; but he was restrained by Burns, who inquired what harm the poor mouse had done him. During the following night, Burns awoke the servant who occupied the bed with him, recited the poem which he had just composed, and said, 'What think you of our mouse now?'

Tender sympathy for what the world is pleased to call the 'lower animals' is one of Burns's noticeable characteristics. He hated the chase, and protested against that spirit in man which can take pleasure in torturing any creature. This feeling he shared with Cowper and Wordsworth and Coleridge, all of whom have written eloquently on this theme.

> 'I would not number in my list of friends,
> Though graced with sensibility and sense,
> The man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.'
>
> COWPER: *The Task.*

'One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride,
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.'

WORDSWORTH: *Hart-Leap Well.*

'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small:
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

COLERIDGE: *Ancient Mariner.*

Burns's magnanimity — largeness of mind — is nobly attested by this poem: instead of grudging a portion of the fruits of the earth, as do many, to what they call the 'thieving mouse,' he willingly shares his food with the little 'beastie,' who 'maun live.'

A WINTER NIGHT. 1786. (Page 23.)

The sympathetic heart of Robbie Burns was never better shown than in this poem. He cannot sleep for thinking of the possible suffering of the unhoused beast and bird in the pitiless storm. Truly, as Carlyle says: 'This poem is worth several homilies on mercy, for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy: his soul rushes forth into all the realms of being: nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him.'

'The love that God had for the universe,' says Stopford Brooke, 'was reflected in the breast of Burns.' It is this all-inclusive love that stamps the poetry of Robert Burns with the seal of true religion. See Matthew x. 29.

The prefatory quotation is from King Lear, Act III., Scene ii.

'It seems to be a general opinion that the six opening stanzas, in the poet's native dialect, are equal to any he ever composed.' Burns himself, in a letter, speaks of this poem as his 'first attempt in that irregular kind of measure in which many of our finest odes are composed.'

1. **Boreas**: the north wind.

3. **Phœbus**: the sun. These are among the few instances in which Burns uses classic names for the common aspects of nature. The entire expression pictures vividly the gloom of the short winter days in Scotland.

31. **Phœbe**: the moon.

Compare the last stanza with that quoted from Coleridge above.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY. 1786. (Page 25.)

This poem belongs to the days of Mossgiel farm. Its first title was *The Gowan*, the Scotch name for daisy. His brother Gilbert says, 'I could easily find the spot where the incident occurred.' When Wordsworth visited the home of Burns, the sight of the field where the 'wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r' had been crushed 'amang the stoure' inspired him to write: —

> '"There," said a stripling, pointing with meet pride
> Towards a low roof, with green trees half-concealed,
> "Is Mossgiel farm: and that's the very field
> Where Burns ploughed up the daisy." Far and wide
> A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
> Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose;
> And by that simple notice, the repose
> Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.
> Beneath 'the random bield of clod or stone,'
> Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
> Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
> Have passed away: less happy than the one
> That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to
> Prove the tender charm of poetry and love.'

Cf. Wordsworth's own poems, *To the Daisy*. The daisy has been a favorite flower with English poets from the time of Chaucer.

ON SCARING SOME WATER FOWL IN LOCH-TURIT. 1787. (Page 27.)

Loch-Turit is a wild lake among the recesses of the Highlands. The poem is the result of a solitary morning's walk, while Burns was staying with Sir William Murray, of Ochtertyre, during one of his Highland tours. It is a feeling expression of his desire to maintain with birds and animals what he has called 'nature's social union,' in the poem, *To a Mouse*. Here, again, he gives expression to his abhorrence of the chase.

It is interesting to observe the English of this poem, in comparison with the Scotch dialect of *To a Mouse*.

VERSES ON THE DESTRUCTION OF SOME WOODS. 1791. (Page 29.)

1. **Nith**: a river of Ayrshire.

48. **a ducal crown**: this refers to the Duke of Queensberry, who had felled the trees on his estates to raise money for a dowry for his daughter. Burns looked upon trees as brothers.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER. 1787. (Page 30.)

The Falls of Bruar in Athole are very picturesque; but their effect was much impaired by the lack of shrubs and trees. During his Highland tour, Burns spent two days at the home of the Duke of Athole. Accompanied by his friend, Professor Walker, the poet visited this romantic scene just at twilight. 'He threw himself,' says Professor Walker, 'on a heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. In a few days, I received a letter from him with the *Petition* enclosed.'

It is pleasant to know that the noble Duke granted the poet's request: the picturesque Falls are now crowned with thriving woods, and the beauty of the scene is much increased.

74. **angel band**: two sons and four daughters.

77. **Albion**: a poetic name for England.

THE BRIGS OF AYR. 1786. (Page 33.)

This poem was written for the second edition of Burns's poems; it is really an expression of gratitude to those friends who had encouraged him by approval of his work. John Ballantyne, to whom it is dedicated, had generously befriended the poet when farming had proved unproductive. At this time, Ballantyne occupied the position of Provost of Ayr; and the erection of a new bridge was proceeding under his magistracy.

The form of the poem is said to have been suggested by Fergusson's *Dialogue between the Plainstanes and Causeway;* but it is certainly true that 'all that lends it life and feeling belongs to

his own heart and to his native Ayr.' No Greek had a keener ear for the voices of the gods in wood and stream than had Burns for the spirit-echoes of the genii of his native land.

11. **their hireling crimes**: see note on line 2, *The Cotter's Saturday Night.*

12. An allusion to the custom of the Swiss to fight in the pay of other nations.

20. A delicate acknowledgment of Mr. Ballantyne's kindness.

52. **Simpson's**: a noted tavern at the Auld Brig end.

57. **Dungeon-clock**: a clock in a steeple connected with the old jail.

58. **Wallace Tow'r**: an old steeple in the High Street, now replaced by an elegant tower so named.

68. **gos**: the gos-hawk, or falcon.

80. **bade an unco bang**: withstood a heavy stroke.

91. **sheep-shank**: contemptible thing.

95. **wad a boddle**: wager a half-farthing.

103. **Ducat-stream**: a noted ford just above the Auld Brig.

118. **haunted Garpal**: in Burns's time, the banks of Garpal Water were believed to be still haunted by ghosts.

123. **Glenbuck**: the source of the river Ayr. **Ratton-key**: a small landing-place above the large quay.

126. **gumlie jaups**: muddy jets. This entire passage turned out to be strikingly prophetic. In 1877 the 'New Brig' was closed to all traffic, because a threatening rent had been discovered in its masonry. On the other hand, the 'Auld Brig,' which for eighty years had been used for foot passengers only, was again opened for wheeled carriages, the new brig being a 'shapeless cairn.'

140. **the second dread command**: the second commandment. See Exodus xx.

175. **mak to through**: pass current.

202. **M'Lauchlan**: a well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin.

225. **Courage**: a complimentary allusion to Captain Hugh Montgomery, of Coilsfield.

226. **Feal**: a tributary of the Ayr, which flows through the grounds of Captain Montgomery.

228. **A female form**: an allusion to Mrs. Stewart, of Stair.

229. **Learning**, etc.: a tribute to Professor Dugald Stewart, of Catrine.

On July 8, 1891, a statue of Burns was unveiled at Ayr. On that occasion, an original poem, entitled *The Auld Brig's Welcome*, was recited by its author, Mr. Wallace Bruce. The following stanzas are taken from that poem: —

'The Auld Brig hails wi' hearty cheer, —
Uncover, lads, for Burns is here!
The bard who links us all to fame,
And blends his own with Scotia's name.

'Old Coila's had her share of fame,
Her bead-roll treasures many a name;
She's had her heroes great and sma',
But Robin stands aboon them a'.

'The auld clay biggin of his birth
Becomes the shrine of all the earth;
The room where rose the cotter's prayer,
The proudest heritage of Ayr.

— 'His living song
Protects the weak and tramples wrong;
Refracting radiance of delight,
His prismed genius, clear and bright,
Illumes all Scotland far and wide,
And Caledonia throbs with pride
To hear her grand old Doric swell
From Highland crag to lowland dell;
To find, where'er her children stray,
Her "Auld Lang Syne," her "Scots wha hae,"
And words of hope which proudly span
The centuries vast — "A man's a man."'

TAM O' SHANTER. 1790. (Page 40.)

This poem belongs to that period of the author's life which was spent at Ellisland, and after he had become famous. It was suggested in this wise: Captain Grose, an antiquary, who was travelling

through Scotland in search of interesting ruins and relics, came to Friars' Carse Hermitage, near Ellisland, and soon became very friendly with the poet. Burns requested him to include Alloway Kirk, where his father was buried, in his work on the 'Antiquities of Scotland.' Grose consented to do so, on condition that Burns should write a poem to accompany the illustration of the old kirk. The result was the production of an inimitable poem, alive with the rollicking spirit of Humor itself. It has been said that 'No other poem in our language displays such variety of power, in the same number of lines.'

For the framework of the story, Burns drew upon two sources: in his youth, he had known a farmer named Grahame, who lived on a little farm of Shanter, near Kirkoswald. On market days he often rode to Ayr, and having lost his money, he told his wife, whose scolding tongue he dreaded, that he had been waylaid by witches, and robbed near Alloway Kirk. This fact Burns has clothed in the traditional witch-lore associated with his boyish recollections of the place.

The wife of the poet relates the circumstances connected with the composition of the tale. It was the work of one day which Burns had spent by the riverside. In the afternoon, she joined him with her two children. He was busily engaged '*croonin to himsel*'.' Not wishing to disturb him, she loitered among the broom. Presently, however, she observed him making wild gesticulations, and, drawing near, she found him with the tears rolling down his cheeks, and reciting these lines:—

> 'Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans
> A' plump, and strapping in their teens.'

Having committed his verses to writing on the top of his sod-dyke, Burns came to the house, and read them immediately 'in high triumph' at the fireside.

Auld Alloway Kirk stands not far from the birthplace of Burns. Tam o' Shanter Inn is situated on High Street, Ayr; in 1892, it was bought by one of the town council, and is now devoted to memorial purposes. The spots mentioned in the poem are pointed out with pride to visitors.

Tam o' Shanter presents vividly one side of Scotch life, and it

divides with *The Cotter's Saturday Night* the reverence and pride of the countrymen of Burns.

1. **chapman billies** : peddler fellows.

23. **ilka melder** : the meaning of the passage is : Every time that he carried corn to the mill, he sat drinking with the miller.

28. **Kirkton** : the village where the parish church stands is called Kirkton, or churchtown, in Scotland. **Jean** : Kennedy, a public-house keeper in Kirkoswald.

40. **reaming swats** : foaming ale.

41. **Souter** : shoemaker.

86. **bogles** : ghosts.

107. **tippenny** : twopenny-ale.

119. **winnock-bunker** : window-seat.

121. **towzie tyke** : shaggy dog.

123. **gart them skirl** : made them scream.

154. **seventeen hunder** : the manufacturer's term for very fine linen, woven in a reed of 1700 divisions.

195. **pussie's** : the hare.

208. It was believed that witches or other evil spirits have no power to follow a man farther than the middle of the nearest running stream.

TO JAMES SMITH. 1786. (Page 47.)

James Smith, to whom this poem was addressed, was a shopkeeper in Mauchline, and the comrade of Burns in many a merry-making. He proved a stanch friend of the poet in very trying circumstances, and Burns was sincerely attached to him.

One critic considers this the best of Burns's poetical epistles for 'the singular ease of the verse ; the moral dignity of one passage, the wit and humor of a second, the elegance of compliment in a third, and the life which animates the whole.'

3. **warlock-breef** : spell.

22. **Hoolie** : softly.

23. **red** : warn.

99. **Luna** : the moon — a symbol of fickleness.

115. **Dempster** : George Dempster, M.P., a distinguished patriot.

116. **garter**: the highest order of knighthood in England is the 'Order of the Garter.' It was instituted by Edward III. **Willie Pitt**: William Pitt, one of the ablest English statesmen of the eighteenth century. He was afterwards raised to the peerage as the Earl of Chatham.

117. **be-ledger'd cit**: a citizen who is engaged in commerce.

123. **muslin-kail**: thin broth.

EPISTLE TO DAVIE. 1784. (Page 52.)

David Sillar, to whom this epistle is addressed, was a schoolmaster who had written some verse in the Scottish dialect. He was one of Burns's most valued friends. He died in 1830, at the age of seventy.

The poet's brother Gilbert relates that, in the summer of 1784, while he and Robert were weeding the garden one day, Robert repeated the greater part of this epistle. Gilbert says: 'I believe that the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him, I was of the opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scottish poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but that here there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language seemed scarcely affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet. Robert seemed well pleased with my criticism.'

20. **wair't**: spend it.

25. This line is quoted from Allan Ramsay — 'Don't ask more, no fear have.'

122. The meaning of this line is, 'Run at an uncommon pace.'

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID. 1786. (Page 56.)

'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' said Jesus.
'These lines are steeped in the spirit of Christianity.'
— STOPFORD BROOKE.

In a letter written in 1784, Burns had penned these words: 'I

have often noticed that every man, even the worst, has something good about him, though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person can be with strict justice called wicked. Let any one, of the strictest character for regularity of conduct, examine how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped because he was out of the line of temptation; and how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know it all. I say, any man who can thus think will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him with a brother's eye.'

'Who, on the text, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," ever preached such a sermon as Burns in his *Address to the Unco Guid?*'

When Wordsworth visited the home of Burns in 1803, sympathetic feeling moved him to pour forth his thoughts in verse — such judgment as we may imagine would have been very grateful to the sorely tried heart of Burns: —

'Leaving each unquiet theme
Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,
And prompt to welcome every gleam
Of good and fair,
Let us beside this limpid stream,
Breathe hopeful air.

'Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
His course was true,
When Wisdom prospered in his sight
And virtue grew.'

ANSWER TO VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE POET. 1787. (Page 58.)

This epistle was called forth by a rhymed complimentary letter which Burns had received, about three months after his arrival in Edinburgh, from the wife of a Roxburghshire laird, who was herself an amateur in the fine arts.

The marlèd plaid referred to by Burns in the last stanza is thus offered by the lady : —

> 'O gif I kenn'd but where ye bide,
> I'd send to you a marlèd plaid ;
> Twad haud your shouthers warm and braw,
> An' douce at kirk or market-shaw.'

PROLOGUE. 1787. (Page 60.)

Mr. Woods, for whom this *Prologue* was written, was a popular actor in Edinburgh. He had been the friend of Fergusson, the poet, and, for that reason, was doubly dear to Burns. He died in 1802, and was buried in the Old Calton burial-ground at Edinburgh. In 1866, his headstone having fallen into decay, it was renewed by 'a number of old citizens who remembered his fame, and the pleasure he had often afforded them.'

8. **Siddons** : an eminent actress. **Southern** : an actor of note.

17. **Philosophy** : the two great lights in Philosophy referred to, were Professor Reid at St. Andrews, and Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh.

19. **History** : Robertson and Hume, the great Scotch historians of the eighteenth century.

21. **Douglas** : an allusion to Home's *Tragedy of Douglas.*

22. **Harley** : Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling.*

CASTLE GORDON. 1787. (Page 61.)

Castle Gordon was the home of the lady who had welcomed Burns to Edinburgh ; during his Highland tour he visited the castle. In his journal, Burns writes : 'The Duke makes me happier than ever great man did — noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable, gay, and kind — the Duchess charming, witty, and sensible — God bless them ! '

The poem was composed after his return to Edinburgh, and was sent to the librarian of Castle Gordon. The duchess guessed the lines to be by Beattie, and on learning that they were by Burns, regretted that they were not in the Scottish language.

Every kindness shown to Burns was keenly appreciated by him, and he was moved to express his feeling in the only way possible — in grateful verse.

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH. 1786. (Page 62.)

This poem was composed soon after Burns's arrival in Edinburgh. It is a nobly dignified expression of his love of his native land, and his pride in her history. It is also a feeling tribute to the kind, appreciative reception which he had met with in the capital.

29. **Burnet**: the daughter of Lord Monboddo, at whose house Burns had been several times entertained.

54. **Haply my sires**, etc.: it is said that the father of the poet fought at Culloden. The ancestors of William Burness were tenant farmers of George Keith, the Earl Mareschal of Scotland; they were stanch Jacobites, and in 1715 joined in the Jacobite uprising. Cf. Scott's description of Edinburgh in *Marmion*, Canto IV., XXX., XXXII.

LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS. 1791. (Page 64.)

This poem was composed at the request of Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, who resided in an old baronial castle on the Nith. Her family had been devoted adherents of the Stuarts, and the unfortunate Queen Mary took refuge in this castle while on her way to England.

Burns was proud of this poem. In a letter to Mrs. Graham, he remarks concerning it: 'Whether it is that the story of our Mary Queen of Scots has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have in the enclosed ballad succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not, but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my Muse for a good while past.'

'This is one of the greatest triumphs of simple art won through the natural power of contrast, often so mysteriously manifested between nature and our human lot.' — J. VEITCH.

33. **thou false woman**: Elizabeth, Queen of England, to whom Mary fled for protection, had her imprisoned, and finally executed.

41. **My son**: James VI. of Scotland, and afterwards James I. of England.

ODE FOR WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY. 1794. (Page 66.)

On one occasion, at a dinner in Dumfries, given by government officials, the health of William Pitt was proposed. 'I give you the health of George Washington, a much greater and better man,' cried Burns. The company demurred, and Burns left the table in disgust. This incident shows why the poet chose to dedicate his *Ode to Liberty* to the name of Washington. In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, Burns wrote: 'I am going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I passed along the road. The subject is *Liberty:* you know, my honored friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it as an irregular Ode for General Washington's birthday.' The stanza referred to is the concluding stanza of the poem.

Burns, in common with other young poets of the period, sympathized with the French Revolutionists in their struggle for liberty. They felt that England, in making war upon France, had betrayed this cause. Cf. Coleridge's *Ode to France*, and Wordsworth's *Sonnets — To Milton* and *Great Men Have Been among Us.*

INSCRIPTION FOR AN ALTAR TO INDEPENDENCE. 1795. (Page 68.)

This fragment breathes the spirit of true independence and the love of virtue.

Cf. Milton's *Comus:* —

> Mortals that would follow me,
> Love Virtue! she alone is free.'

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL. 1787. (Page 69.)

The castle of Taymouth, the residence of the Earl of Breadalbane, is said to be a magnificent structure, surrounded by splendid old trees and romantic scenery. Burns visited this spot in

his Highland tour in company with his friend, Mr. Nicol. 'The truthfulness of Burns's description will be felt by all who know the locality.'

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND. 1786. (Page 70.)

The young friend to whom this epistle is addressed was Andrew Aiken, son of Robert Aiken, to whom *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is dedicated. He became a merchant in Liverpool, and was honored with an appointment to a Russian consulate.

The poem is replete with wise suggestion for the conduct of life, and shows clearly what reverence and large charity actuated the writer; it also reveals what motive-principles he would inculcate, and what virtues he would cultivate.

Stanza 5 gives advice which may be paralleled by that of Polonius to his son, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet:* —

> 'Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
> Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.'

87. **reck the rede**: heed the counsel. Cf. *Hamlet*, I. iii. 51. The worth of a writer's words should be estimated by their intrinsic merit, not by his own shortcomings. Burns is frank with his readers; he acknowledges how far below the level of his own standard is much of his life. His *Address to the Unco Guid*, itself a plea for charity in judging, is a revelation of his heart struggles.

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN. 1785. (Page 72.)

The suggestion for this poem may be traced to the poet's recollection of his mother's songs heard in his childhood. He writes to his friend, Mrs. Dunlop: 'I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived in her girlish years; the good old man was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The Life and Age of Man*.'

The incident which served as an immediate suggestion, however, occurred in the poet's twenty-sixth year. One evening he went to see a young girl who lived with a decrepit old father, and found

the old man mourning because his cow was lost. The daughter had gone in search of the stray animal, and Burns set out to look for her. On the way he met another young man who had come on the same errand as himself. Burns said to him: 'Baith she and the cow's lost, and the auld man is perfectly wild at the want of them.' Then they both joined in the search: Burns's companion noticed that he was very sober for a time, when suddenly he turned and walked rapidly toward Mauchline. The next time they met, Burns apologized for his singular behavior. — 'Oh,' said his friend, 'Robin, there is no occasion, for I supposed some subject had occurred to you, and that you were thinking, and perhaps composing something on it.' — 'You were right,' said the poet, 'and I will now read you what was chiefly the work of that evening.' The grief of the poor old man had recalled the words of the song that he had often heard his mother sing, and this was the result.

The first stanza of *The Life and Age of Man* is as follows: —

'Upon the sixteen hundred year
Of God and fifty-three
Frae Christ was born, who bought us dear,
As writings testifie,
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did lie alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah! man was made to mourn.'

A PRAYER, UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH. 1781. (Page 75.)

Burns writes of this poem: 'There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broken by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened and indeed effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy; in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following prayer.'

John Stuart Blackie says of this poem: 'The man who could feel and write thus was not far from the best piety of the Psalms of David.'

WINTER. A DIRGE. 1781. (Page 76.)

This poem belongs to the same period referred to in the *Prayer.* Burns's life seemed to lie, as he said, 'in a tract of misfortunes.' His father's health was failing; he had been robbed by his partner; his flax-dressing shop had burned. He himself had fallen into debasing associations.

We learn from Burns's *Commonplace Book* that he took a peculiar pleasure in winter. He writes: 'There is scarcely any object gives me more — I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me, — than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the language of Scripture, "walks on the wings of the wind."'

Professor Veitch says: 'We ought to be thankful to the poet for his precious susceptibilities, for thus the world came to know that there was a new link of communion between the pure soul of man and the universe of God.'

9. This line is quoted from the poems of Young.

THE FIRST PSALM (Page 77) and THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM (Page 78).

Both were composed in 1781. The Ninetieth Psalm is said to have been a favorite in the household of William Burness.

Cf. the metrical paraphrases of Psalms by Milton.

'It is the religious element in Burns that fuses and kindles all the rest, that makes him the voice of the race at its best when he is at his best.' — E. CHARLTON BLACK.

THE SONGS OF BURNS.

During the last eight years of his life, Burns's genius found expression chiefly in song. In all modern literature there are no lyrics like his; as one writer says: 'His songs are not, like many modern ones, set to music; they are themselves music.' The explanation of this is not far to seek: he tells that he laid it down as a rule, whenever he wished to compose a song, to croon over some melody until he caught its inspiration; by this he modulated the rhythm of his words.

Burns's childhood was lived in an atmosphere of song; his mother sang the old Scottish tunes to her boy from his cradle; through all his young life on the farm, the future poet daily heard and whistled and sang these tunes of his native land. As he drove his plough, or walked in the fields, he was accustomed to pore over an old song-book which he dearly prized. Love of country was thus both awakened and nourished; even then he hoped that he might sometime, 'for poor old Scotland's sake, sing a song at least.'

The songs of Burns, although national in the sense that they truthfully and powerfully voice the spirit of the land itself, are universal in that they speak the language of the heart, and find words for 'the thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.' Principal Shairp says that Burns was happy as a singer in that 'his own strong nature, his birth, and all his circumstances, conspired to fix his interest on the primary and permanent affections, the great fundamental relations of life, — not on the social conventions, which are here to-day, forgotten in the next generation. Consider, too, the perfect naturalness, the entire spontaneity, of his singing. It gushes from him as easily, as clearly, as sunnily, as the skylark's song does. In this he surpasses all other song-composers.'

These songs cover a wide range and touch many moods.

THE AUTHOR'S FAREWELL TO HIS NATIVE COUNTRY. 1786. (Page 79.)

This song was composed when Burns was expecting to leave his native land for Jamaica. His departure was prevented by the timely reception of a letter from Dr. Blacklock of Edinburgh, which led him to visit the capital in order to publish a second edition of his poems. Professor Walker, who met Burns at breakfast with Dr. Blacklock soon after his arrival in Edinburgh, tells that, after breakfast, he asked Burns to 'communicate some of his unpublished pieces; when he recited his farewell song to the Banks of Ayr, introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it was composed. He had left the house of a friend to whom he had said farewell, and on his way home had to cross a wide stretch of solitary moor. The aspect of nature harmonized with his feelings. It was a lowering and heavy evening in the end of autumn. The wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and the long spear-grass which bent before it. The clouds were driving across the sky: and cold, pelting showers, at intervals, added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind.' In that gloomy night-walk, this touching lament was composed.

THE BANKS O' DOON. 1791. (Page 80.)

The sadness by which the poet was oppressed in the last years of his life is forcibly expressed in this poem. His love for the streams of his childhood's home has inspired many beautiful lines.

AFTON WATER. 1791. (Page 81.)

Afton is a tributary of the Nith. The scenes along its banks are said to be beautiful. The Mary who 'sleeps by the murmuring stream' is believed to be *Highland Mary*, who was buried in the kirkyard at Greenock. 'A kind of holy calm pervades the soul of the reader who peruses, or the auditor who listens to the music of this unique strain.'

HIGHLAND MARY. 1792. (Page 82.)

Mary Campbell, whose memory the poet has immortalized in this exquisite strain of true feeling, was the daughter of a mariner. While in service at the castle of Montgomery, she made the acquaintance of Burns, and an ardent attachment was the result. When Mary was about to return to her father's home at Greenock, the lovers took an impressive farewell of each other. Standing on either side of a running stream, they lifted up water in their hands, and vowed love 'while woods grew and waters ran.' Then they exchanged Bibles as a token of faith and constancy. It proved to be their final farewell; for 'sweet Highland Mary' died while making preparations for her marriage.

In sending this poem to Thomson, Burns wrote: 'The foregoing song pleases myself: I think it is in my happiest manner.'

'The poem is an excellent illustration of a certain happy arrangement of syllables, without any sameness of jingle at the end of the lines. There is scarcely a true rhyme in the whole thirty-two verses, and yet the ear is perfectly satisfied with its musical rhythm.' — DOUGLAS.

AULD LANG SYNE. 1788. (Page 83.)

'Is not the old Scotch phrase,' Burns writes to Mrs. Dunlop, 'Auld lang syne, exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul.'

'In songs like *Auld Lang Syne*,' says Shairp, 'Burns has approached nearer to the Biblical severity, such as we find in the words of Naomi, or one of the old Hebrew patriarchs, than any other modern poet.'

'This poem is as characteristically Scottish as the heather on the brae, or the pine-tree in the glen.' — BLACKIE.

21. **guid-willie**: hearty, with good will. **waught**: copious drink. An Edinburgh editor corrects the frequent mistake of the reading '*gude willie-waught*.' He says: 'willie-waught is nonsense; but "gude-willie," or "ill-willie," is a compound adjective in every-day use.'

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO. 1789. (Page 84.)

'Many a glowing image of youthful love he has left us, the best of them as delicate and pure in their passion as ever lyrics were; and here the circle of fervid verse is completed by the most perfect utterance of old and faithful affection.' — MRS. OLIPHANT.

It is said that the John referred to in this poem was a native of Ayrshire and a carpenter by trade; but the feeling excited and satisfied by its eloquent simplicity is universal.

MY NANNIE'S AWA. 1794. (Page 84.)

This lyric is said to have been suggested by thoughts of an absent friend, Mrs. M'Lehose, of Edinburgh, who had been very kind to the poet during his stay in that city. At the time it was composed, Mrs. M'Lehose was in the West Indies.

Cf. Wordsworth's lyric, 'She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways.'

SONG. 1795. (Page 85.)

'Love of country often mingles in the lyric strains of Burns with his personal attachments, and in few more beautifully than in this. The heroine was Mrs. Burns.' — ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS. 1789. (Page 85.)

In his notes, Burns says that the four lines which form the chorus of this song are old, and that the rest is his own composition. They were beloved by Walter Scott, who often used to sing them.

SONNET WRITTEN ON THE AUTHOR'S BIRTHDAY. 1793. (Page 86.)

Allan Cunningham tells us that these lines were written in a favorite resort of Burns. 'Burns was fond of a saunter in a leafless wood when the winter storm howled among the branches. These characteristic lines were composed on the morning of his thirty-fifth birthday, with the Nith at his feet, and the ruins of

Lincluden at his side; he is willing to accept the unlooked-for song of the thrush as a fortunate omen.'

BANNOCKBURN. 1793. (Page 87.)

According to the poet's own account, this ode was composed, as so many of his songs have been produced, under the suggestive inspiration of haunting memories of some old Scotch air, — in this case, *Hey, tuttie, taitie*, the tune to which, as he had heard, the soldiers of Bruce's army marched to Bannockburn. 'This thought,' he says, 'in my solitary wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning. So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty as he did that day.'

In a letter written to Lord Buchan, in January, 1794, Burns says: 'Independently of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with anything in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe, to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly daring and greatly injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country or perish with her. Liberty! thou art a prize truly, and indeed valuable, for never canst thou be too dearly bought!'

Carlyle says: 'So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchmen or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war ode, the best we believe that was ever written by any man.'

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT. 1795. (Page 88.)

This noble lyric, inspired by manly independence, is, perhaps, the most melodious, and at the same time the most fervid and forcible expression of the innate worth of man that has ever been made. One writer says, that 'of all the poems and songs he ever wrote, it could least be spared from a collection of his works. Béranger of France, Goethe of Germany, and, indeed, people of

every nation, quote its generous and powerful couplets whenever they speak of Burns.'

Professor Blackie says: 'In this song we have the finest combination of practical philosophy, evangelical piety, and political wisdom that ever was put into a popular song. In this song he soars above all party feelings, and merely announces plainly what is the poet's mission, no less than the prophet's, — to preach from the housetop that there is no respect of persons with God.'

'Burns was one of the people, and he spoke for the people. He broke the pathetic silence of the toiling multitudes with a voice so sweet and strong and true that it rang into every heart that longs for freedom, and into every home where liberty is dear.'

— E. CHARLTON BLACK.

Cf. his poem, *Elegy on the Death of Captain Matthew Henderson.*

THE PLOUGHMAN. (Page 89.)

It is natural that the poet whose Genius found him at the plough, and cast her mantle over him, as he said, should sing of the honest-hearted, simple delights of the ploughman's life. In another of his poems, we find the same joyful expression: —

'As I was a-wand'ring ae morning in spring,
I heard a young ploughman so sweetly to sing:
And as he was singin', thir words he did say, —
"There's nae life like the ploughman's in the month o' sweet May.

'"The lav'rock in the morning she'll rise frae her nest,
And mount i' the air wi' the dew on her breast,
And wi' the merry ploughman she'll whistle and sing,
And at night she'll return to her nest back again."'

Cf. also his ballad, *My Father was a Farmer.*

A BARD'S EPITAPH. 1786. (Page 90.)

This self-estimate of himself was written for the close of the first volume of Burns's poems, which was published to defray the expenses of his expected voyage to the West Indies, and may be taken as the sincere expression of his feelings as he reviewed his

life up to that time. It shows plainly what is confirmed by many of his other poems — that he understood his own weakness, and his powers and real worthiness as well.

'Burns does not deceive himself,' says Stopford Brooke; 'for he has one of the noblest qualities a man can possess, — entire sincerity with himself. It never occurred to him to be untrue.'

Cf. his own poem, *Epistle to a Young Friend;* also Wordsworth's lines, *At the Grave of Burns.*

From the Poem, TO A LOUSE. 1786. (Page 91.)

Who but Burns could have treated such a theme in such a manner as to redeem it from its repulsiveness, — and, still more, to deduce from it a lesson of immortal and universal truth and power?

NATURE'S LAW. 1786. (Page 91.)

This closing stanza of a poem addressed to his friend Gavin Hamilton may fitly close a volume of Selections from the Poems of Robert Burns. Although no descendants of Scotland's truest bard seem to have inherited his poetic gifts, the wish is best fulfilled in the immortality of his own verse, and in the constantly widening circle of love in which his poetry is cherished by lovers of true poetry in every land.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASS STUDY.

These suggestions for study are offered in the hope that students and teachers who are not well acquainted with Robert Burns, or who have not learned to love him, may find them of some assistance towards a knowledge of the real Burns and an appreciation of his worth. For to know a writer, one must read his mind and listen to his heart-beats, as mind and heart have revealed themselves through his expression of thought and feeling in his works.

The suggestions are intended only for those who need them, or who would be helped by them.

In case a class is making a study of the historical development of English literature in the eighteenth century, Burns will be studied in relation to the gradual change in the point of view concerning man and nature, which is noticeable in the poets from Pope to Cowper and Wordsworth. A judicious selection of representative poems, with suggestions of topics for guidance, will enable pupils to discover for themselves the ground for the statement that "love of nature and love of man, which had been wanting in the poetry of Pope and his school, were restored by Burns, Cowper, and Wordsworth."

The general topics which are given below for the study of Burns will serve also for this comparison.

Study the poems to discover —

1. Burns's love of native land; of his own shire; his ideal of patriotism.
2. His feelings about home and home ties.

3. His feeling for nature — show what poetic uses he has made of nature.
4. His feeling towards what are termed the lower animals; concerning man's treatment of animals.
5. His self-knowledge; his motives and ideals.
6. His independence of spirit.
7. His estimate of manly worth.
8. His religious feeling.
9. His ideas concerning poetry and his own mission as a poet.
10. His generous recognition of the work of other poets; his freedom from petty jealousy.
11. His use of the supernatural and of folk-lore.
12. Find illustrations of his power to 'flash a scene upon the eye.'

These topics can be reported by reference lists, which can be made the subjects of conversation in class; or they may be used as themes for compositions, different topics being assigned to different pupils. In either method, however, every poem should be read with these points in mind, in order to discover what are Burns's controlling principles and tastes, and his ideals of life.

At the close of the Introduction will be found some critical estimates of the poetry of Burns. It would be a profitable exercise for students to seek in the poems the justification of these statements. Such an exercise cultivates discriminating judgment and the power to form unprejudiced opinions.

In order to gain a true estimate of Burns as a poet, it is desirable to study his poems from the artistic standpoint. No one knew better than Burns himself his limitations as a poet. Untoward circumstances, want of scholastic training, and his early death forbade his attempting epic or drama. In the realm of pure lyric poetry he is unsurpassed among English writers. Study him as a lyric poet[1]; as a writer of ballads[2]; to discover

[1] In Gummere's *Art of Poetics* a clear analytic discussion of the qualities and formal divisions of Lyric Poetry is given.

[2] Principal Shairp's article on 'Scottish Song and Burns,' in his book entitled *Aspects of Poetry*, contains one of the best expositions of the nature of Lyric Poetry.

his dramatic qualities; his management of the dialogue; his humor; the qualities of his diction in the Scotch dialect, and in the use of English.

STUDY OF PARTICULAR POEMS.

Plans for the study of four of the longer poems are here given.

THE VISION. (Page 1.)

a. Examine the structure of the poem; note its divisions; describe its versification.

b. Note the change of feeling, and the cause.

c. Discover what the poem reveals of the poet's life-experiences; his self-estimate; the themes which he chooses; his loves, hopes, and ideals; his idea of the distribution of gifts.

d. Observe what it reveals of Scottish life and customs.

e. Discover fine passages of description; expressive epithets; notable figures.

f. Mention historical allusions; allusions to literature.

(Compare Wordsworth's Sonnet, 'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room.')

The Vision is a favorite form with Romantic poets, and is peculiarly adapted to self-communing.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT. (Page 10.)

a. What stanza is used in this poem? Describe it as to (1) metre; (2) rhyme.

b. What is the especial significance of the prefatory stanza?

c. To whom is the poem dedicated? In what spirit?

d. What season is made the background of the picture? Show wherein its fitness consists.

e. Mention the particulars which contribute to the poetic effect of stanzas 1 and 2. Compare this opening picture with that of Gray's *Elegy*, as to (1) the feeling portrayed; (2) vividness.

f. What virtues are inculcated in this poem?
g. Examine the diction as to (1) source of words; (2) figures.
h. Infer from this poem something of the poet's views of life.
i. Can this picture of the home of a Scotch peasant be regarded as a universal poem?

THE BRIGS OF AYR. (Page 33.)

a. Examine the structure of this poem analytically, and refer the different divisions to the form of verse to which they belong.
b. Study carefully the characterizations of the two spirits to discover their truth and poetic power. What Gothic features are embodied?
c. Compare the introduction with that of *The Cotter's Saturday Night.*
d. Infer Burns's feelings concerning the poet's inspiration and reward.
e. Discuss the pictures of nature in this poem, as to their poetic purpose, their beauty, and their power.
f. Mention figures of Personification, and show wherein they are effective.
g. Discuss the satire in this poem, and infer from it Burns's opinions on questions of taste; his public spirit; his standard of manhood.
h. Explain allusions in lines 12, 14, 73, 97, 137, 140, 228, 230.
i. Characterize the style of the poem.

TAM O' SHANTER. (Page 40.)

a. To what class of poetry does this poem belong?
b. Discover its poetic qualities; the source of its power.
c. Tell the story in prose.
d. Make a word-picture of Tam and of his wife.
e. Mention points of folk-lore embodied in the poem.

f. What does it reveal of Scotch life? Contrast with *The Cotter's Saturday Night.* The Scotch people are said to be as proud of this poem as of that. Why?

g. Select passages of especial beauty or power.

h. How is nature used in this poem?

i. Discuss the poem as to metre, diction, figures, etc.

GLOSSARY.

A', all.
Aboon, above, up.
Abread, abroad.
Acquent, acquainted.
Ae, one.
Aff, off.
Aft, aften, often.
Agley, wrong, off the right path.
Aiblins, perhaps.
Ain, own.
Airn, iron.
Aith, oath.
Aiver, an old horse.
Alane, alone.
Amaist, almost.
Amang, among.
Ance, once.
Ane, one.
Anither, another.
Auld, old.
Ava, at all.

Ba', ball.
Bade an unco bang, withstood a heavy stroke.
Bairn, a child.
Baith, both.
Bane, bone.
Bang, to beat, to drive, to excel.
Barmie, yeasty.
Baws'nt, having a white stripe down the face.
Bear, barley.
Beet, to add fuel to a fire.
Beld, bald.
Belyve, by and by.
Ben, into the spence, or parlor.
Beuk, a book.
Bickering, hurrying, speedy.
Bield, shelter.
Bien, wealthy, plentiful.
Big, to build.
Biggin, a building.
Billie, brother, companion.
Bing, a heap of grain, potatoes, etc.
Birk, birch.
Birkie, a conceited fellow.
Bizz, to buzz.
Blastet, worthless.
Blastie, a shrivelled dwarf.
Blastit, blasted.
Blate, bashful.
Blaw, to blow.
Bleeze, blaze.
Blellum, nonsense, an idle talker.
Blether, to talk idly, nonsense.
Blethering, nonsensical.
Blink, a smiling look, a little while.
Bluid, blood.
Bock, to gush intermittently.
Boddle, a farthing, a copper coin (value two Scotch pennies).

Bogles, ghosts, bogies.
Bonny, handsome, fine.
Boost, must needs.
Bore, a crevice, a hole in the wall.
Bousing, drinking.
Brae, the slope of a hill.
Braid, broad.
Brattle, a short race, hurry, scamper.
Braw, gallant, handsome.
Brawly, very well, heartily.
Braxies, diseased sheep.
Breeks, breeches.
Brent-new, brand-new, in the fashion.
Brig, a bridge.
Brither, a brother.
Brock, a badger.
Broo, broth, water.
Brose, or **broose**, broth.
Brugh, a borough.
Buirdly, stout.
Bum-clock, the humming beetle.
Burdies, damsels.
Bure, bore.
Burn, a small stream, a brook.
Buskit, dressed.
But, without, outside.
Byke, a bee-hive.

Ca', to call, to drive.
Caird, a tinker, a fortune-teller.
Cairn, a loose heap of stones.
Cannie, or **canny**, gentle, mild.
Cantie, or **canty**, cheerful.
Cantraip, a charm, a spell.
Carlin, an old hag.
Cartis, cards.
Cauld, cold.
Chapman, a pedler.
Chiel, a young fellow.
Chittering, shivering.
Claes, clothes.
Claivers, idle stories.
Clap, the clapper of a mill.
Clarkit, wrote.
Clash, an idle tale.
Clatter, an idle story.
Claught, snatched at.
Clautit, scraped.
Cleed, to clothe.
Cleeding, clothing.
Cleekit, caught hold of each other.
Clishmaclaver, idle conversation.
Coft, bought.
Cog, or **coggie**, a wooden dish.
Collie, a sheep dog.
Cood, the cud.
Coof, or **cuif**, a blockhead, a fool.
Coost, cast off.
Corbies, crows.
Core, party, clan.
Cowrin', shivering, trembling.
Cowte, colt.
Crabbit, crabbed, fretful.
Crack, to talk, conversation.
Craig, neck, a high rock.
Cranreuch, the hoar-frost.
Crap, a crop.
Craw, a crow.
Creeshie, greasy.
Crony, a friend, a gossip.
Crood, to coo as a dove.
Crooning, humming.
Crouse, cheerful, courageous.
Crowlin', crawling.
Cummock, a staff with a crooked head.

Curple, the crupper.
Cutty, short.

Daffin, merriment, diversion.
Daft, merry, giddy, foolish.
Daimen-icker, an ear of corn occasionally.
Darena, dare not.
Darg, or **daurg**, a day's labor.
Daur, dare; **dautit**, fondled, caressed.
Deil, devil.
Descrive, perceive.
Dight, to wipe.
Ding, to surpass, to push.
Dirl, to shake.
Dizzen, a dozen.
Doited, stupefied, silly from age.
Donsie, unlucky.
Douce, or **douse**, sober, wise, prudent.
Doure, sullen, harsh.
Dreep, to ooze, to drop.
Drouthy, thirsty.
Drumly, muddy.
Dub, a small pond.
Duddie, ragged.
Duddies, clothes.
Dune, done.
Dusht, overcome with fear.

E'e, or **ee**, the eye; pl. **een**.
Eerie, scared, dreading spirits.
Eild, old age.
Eldritch, ghastly, elvish.
Eneuch, enough.
Ettle, to aim, to try.
Eydent, diligent.

Fa', to fall, to try.
Fain, desirous of, fond.
Fairin, a present from a fair.
Fallow, fellow.
Fand, found.
Fash, to trouble, to care for.
Fasht, troubled.
Fause, false.
Faut, fault.
Fawsont, decent, seemly.
Featly, neatly, gracefully.
Fecht, to fight.
Feg, a fig.
Fell, keen, biting.
Ferlie, or **ferley**, to wonder.
Fidge, to fidget.
Fient, a fiend, a petty oath.
Fier, sound, healthy.
Fit, a foot, or footstep.
Flang, threw with violence.
Flannin, flannel.
Flichterin', fluttering.
Flingin-tree, a flail.
Flunkie, a servant in livery.
Forfairn, jaded, forlorn.
Forfoughten, fatigued.
Forgather'd, met together.
Fou, or **fu'**, drunk, full.
Foughten, troubled, fatigued.
Frae, from.
Fyke, trifling cares, fret.

Gab, mouth.
Gae, to go.
Gaed, went.
Gaen, or **gane**, gone.
Gang, to go, to walk.
Gar, to make.
Gash, wise, sagacious.
Gate, manner.
Gaucie, or **gawcie**, large, plump.
Gaudsman, one who drives the horses at the plough.

Gaun, going.
Gear, riches, goods.
Geck, to toss the head in scorn.
Geordie, a guinea.
Ghaist, a ghost.
Gie, to give.
Gied, gave.
Gien, given.
Gin, if.
Glaikit, thoughtless, foolish.
Glint, to peep.
Glinted, glanced.
Gloamin, the twilight.
Glowerin, gazing.
Glow'r, to glare, to stare.
Gowan, the daisy.
Gowd, gold.
Gowdspink, the goldfinch.
Gowk, a term of contempt.
Grane, to groan.
Grat, wept.
Gree, prize.
Greet, to shed tears, to weep.
Grozet, a gooseberry.
Grushie, thick, of thriving growth.
Gude, or **guid**, good.
Gumlie, muddy.

Ha', hall.
Hae, to have.
Haffet, the temple, the side of the head.
Hafflins, partly, almost.
Hain, to spare.
Hained, saved.
Haith, a petty oath.
Haivers, idle talk.
Hal, or **hald**, an abiding-place.
Hallan, a rustic porch.
Hame, home.
Hansel, first gift.
Hap, an outer garment, to wrap.
Happer, the hopper of a mill.
Happing, hopping.
Harkit, listened.
Harn, a very coarse linen.
Har'st, harvest.
Haud, to hold.
Haughs, valleys; low-lying, rich land.
Hawkie, a cow.
Heapit, heaped.
Hech, an exclamation of wonder; a sigh of weariness.
Heeze, to raise, to lift.
Herryment, devastation.
Het, hot, heated.
Hilch, to halt.
Hing, to hang.
Hirple, to walk with difficulty.
Histie, dry, barren.
Hizzie, a young girl.
Hoast, a cough.
Hog-shouther, to jostle.
Hostin, coughing.
Houlet or **Howlet**, an owl.
Howe, a hollow, a dell.
Howkin, digging deep.
Howkit, digged.
Hurdies, hips.

Icker, an ear of corn.
Ilk, or **Ilka**, each, every.
Ingle, fire, the fireside.
Ither, other.

Jauk, to dally at work.
Jaup, a jet or splash of any liquid.
Jinkin, dodging.

Jouk, to stoop, to bow the head.
Jundie, to push with the elbow.

Kail, broth, cabbage.
Kain, farm produce paid as rent.
Kebbuck, cheese.
Keek, to peep, a sly look.
Ken, to know.
Kennin', a trifle.
Kirn, a churn, the harvest supper.
Kittle, to tickle.
Knappin-hammer, a hammer for breaking stone.
Knowe, a hillock.
Kye, cows.

Lade, a load.
Laggen, the angle between the side and the bottom of a wooden dish.
Laird, a lord.
Lairing, wading in mud.
Laith, loth.
Laithfu', bashful.
Lane, lone; **my lane**, myself alone.
Lanely, lonely.
Lang, long.
Lap, did leap.
Lave, the rest, the remainder.
Laverock, the lark.
Lear, learning.
Lee-lang, live long.
Leuk, look.
Lift, sky, heaven.
Limmer, a mistress.
Link, to trip along.
Linn, a waterfall, a cascade.
Lint, flax.
Linties, or **lintwhites**, linnets.
Loan, a narrow way between hedges.
Loof, palm of the hand.
Lowe, a flame.
Lowping, leaping.
Lug, the ear.
Lunt, a column of smoke.
Lyart, gray.

Mair, more.
Maist, most, almost.
Mak, to make.
Marléd, parti-colored.
Maukin, a hare.
Maun, must.
Mavis, the thrush.
Meikle, or **muckle**, much.
Melder, a load of corn for the mill.
Mense, good manners.
Merle, blackbird.
Messan, a small dog.
Mirk, dark, darkness.
Mither, mother.
Mony, many.
Mottie, full of motes.
Moudiewort, a mole.
Muslin-kail, thin broth.

Na, or **nae**, no, not, nor.
Naig, a nag.
Nane, none.
Nappy, strong ale.
Neebor, or **neibor**, neighbor.
Neest, next.
Niffer, exchange, barter.
Nowte, oxen, black cattle.

O', of.
O'ly, cravat.
Ony, any.

Or, before.
Ourie, drooping, shivering.
Oursel, ourselves.
Ower, owre, ow'r, over.

Pack, intimate, familiar.
Painch, stomach.
Paitrick, a partridge.
Parritch, oatmeal porridge or pudding.
Pattle, a small spade.
Paukie, cunning, sly.
Pechan, the crop, stomach.
Pit, to put.
Pleugh, plough.
Poind, to seize cattle, etc., for debt.
Poortith, poverty.
Pou, pull.
Poussie, a hare or a cat.
Pouthery, like powder.
Prig, to cheapen, to dispute.
Propone, to propose.

Quaick, quack.
Quat, quit.
Quaukin, quaking.
Quean, a young woman.

Rair, to roar.
Rantin, joyous.
Rape, straw rope.
Rase, rose.
Rattons, rats.
Rax, to stretch.
Ream, to cream, froth.
Reaming, brimful, frothing.
Reck, to heed.
Rede, counsel.
Red-wat-shod, walking in blood.
Reek, smoke.
Rief, slyness.
Rig, ridge.
Rigwoodie, withered.
Rin, to run.
Roset, rosin.
Row, to roll, to wrap.
Rowte, to low, to bellow.
Rowth, plenty.

Sae, so.
Sair, sore.
Sang, a song.
Sark, a shirt.
Sarkit, clothed.
Saul, soul.
Saunt, a saint.
Sautit, salted.
Scaur, a precipitous bank of earth.
Sconner, to loathe.
Shaw, to show, a small wood.
Sheugh, a ditch.
Shore, to offer, to threaten.
Sic, such.
Siller, silver, money.
Simmer, summer.
Skaith, damage, injury.
Skellum, a worthless fellow.
Skelp, a slap.
Skelpit, rode carelessly.
Skirl, to shriek, to cry.
Sklented, slanted.
Slap, a gate, a narrow opening through a hedge.
Sleekit, sleek, sly.
Sma', small.
Smeek, smoke.
Smiddie, smithy.
Smoored, smothered.
Smytrie, a number huddled together.

Snash, impertinence.
Snaw, snow.
Snaw-broo, melted snow.
Sneeshin-mill, snuff-box.
Snell, bitter, biting.
Snick, the latch of a door.
Snowket, snuffed.
Sonsie, comely, jolly.
Souple, flexible, swift.
Souter, shoemaker.
Sowpe, a spoonful.
Sowth, to whistle over a tune.
Sowther, to solder.
Spairge, to soil, to clash.
Spate, a flood.
Spaviet, diseased.
Spean, to wean.
Speel, to climb.
Spence, the country parlor.
Spier, to ask, to enquire.
Sprattle, to scramble.
Squad, a crew, a party.
Squattle, to sprawl.
Stacher, to stagger.
Stane, a stone.
Staumrel, a blockhead.
Staw, did steal.
Stechin, cramming.
Steek, to close, a stitch.
Steer, to molest, to stir.
Stents, dues of any kind.
Stibble, stubble.
Stoure, dust.
Strang, strong.
Straught, straight.
Streek, to stretch.
Streekit, stretched.
Stroan't, spouted.
Sturt, trouble.
Sud, should.
Sugh, a rushing sound, sighing.
Sumphs, stupid fellows.
Swat, did sweat.
Swats, new ale.
Swirl, an eddying blast or pool.
Swith, swift, to get away.
Syne, since.

Tae, toe.
Taen, taken.
Tak, to take.
Tauld, told.
Tawted, or **tawtie**, matted, uncombed.
Teen, sorrow, chagrin.
Tent, to take heed.
Tentie, heedful, cautious.
Tentless, careless, heedless.
Teugh, tough.
Thack, a thatch.
Thack an rape, clothes.
Thae, those.
Thairms, fiddlestrings.
Thegither, together.
Thir, these.
Thirl, to thrill.
Thole, to suffer, to endure.
Thowe, thaw.
Thrang, a crowd.
Thrave, twenty-four sheaves.
Till't, to it.
Timmer, timber, a tree.
Tint, lost.
Tither, the other.
Tocher, marriage portion.
Tousie, rough, shaggy.
Towmond, a twelvemonth.
Transmugrified, metamorphosed.
Trashtie, rubbish, trash.
Trow, to believe.
Trowth, truth.

Twa, two.
Twal, twelve o'clock.
Twined, bereft.
Tyke, a vagrant dog.

Unco (adj.), strange, uncouth; (adv.), very.
Uncos, news.
Unkenn'd, unknown.
Upo', upon.
Usquebae, whiskey.

Vauntie, proud, joyous.
Vera, very.
Virl, a ring around a column.

Wad, would, to bet.
Wadna, would not.
Wae, woe.
Waefu', sorrowful.
Wale, to choose.
Waly, ample, goodly.
Wark, work.
Warly, worldly.
Warst, worst.
Warstled, wrestled.
Wa's, walls.
Wastrie, prodigality.
Waught, a copious draught.
Waukit, thickened.
Waur, worse, to worst.
Wean, a child.
Wee, little.
Weeder-clips, hoes.
Weel, well.
Weet, rain, wetness.
Westlin, western.
Wha, who.
Whalpit, whelped.
Whare, where.
Whase, whose.
Whid, a quick motion.
Whiddin, running as a hare.
Whigmeleeries, fancies.
Whiles, or whyles, sometimes.
Whins, furze bushes.
Whirligigums, useless ornaments.
Whisht, silence.
Wi', with.
Winna, will not.
Winnock, window.
Winnock-bunker, window-seat.
Winsome, bright, attractive.
Wist, knew.
Wonner, a wonder.
Wrang, wrong.
Wyliecoat, a flannel vest.

Yealing, born in the same year.
Yerkit, lashed.
Yestreen, yesternight.
Yill, ale.
Yont, beyond.
Yowe, a ewe.

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